A HISTORY OF JEWISH LITERATURE

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A HISTORY OF JEWISH LITERATURE

FROM THE CLOSE OF THE BIBLE TO OUR OWN DAYS

By

MEYER WAXMAN, PH.D.

VOL. I

FROM THE CLOSE OF THE CANON TO THE END OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Jamque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira nec ignes,
Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas.
(Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* B.XV, 871-2.)

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To the Memory of My Parents
MORDECAI and SARAH
This Volume is Dedicated as a
Token of Reverence
and Filial Piety

PREFACE

The undertaking of the writing of a history of Post-Biblical Jewish literature, the development of which occupies more than half of the time of the history of civilized humanity, and the extent of its distribution in space more than half of the globe, if not done by a Steinschneider or one like him, may be considered by many, to say the least, presumptuous. A word of explanation as to the purpose of the work may be, therefore, necessary.

The purpose of this history is to make accessible to the large lay intelligent public the results of Jewish scholarship and research in the various branches of Jewish literature, carried on during the last century; to coördinate and correlate the scattered facts and the numerous data into one whole, so as to present a complete picture of the productivity of the Jewish genius during the ages. That such a work is necessary, and in fact comes to satisfy a crying need, is evident to anyone who is even superficially acquainted with the state of the spread of Jewish knowledge.

It is deplorable, but true nevertheless, that in spite of the fact that "Jewish science" or scholarship is more than a century old, and that the literature produced by it in various languages is both extensive and of high quality, the influence it exerted upon the intelligent reading public is not proportionate to its efforts. Knowledge of Jewish literature, of its ideals and ideas, of its views of life and human conduct is comparatively scant even in the higher intellectual circles. This is true not only of non-Jews interested in matters Jewish, but of Jews as well. Even at the present, when apparently, partly due to the nationalistic movement, there seems to be a desire in many Jewish circles to acquaint themselves with the treasures of the Jewish spirit, the efforts to obtain this coveted knowledge fall far below the extent of the desire.

To somewhat ameliorate these conditions, to supply to those who want to know the contents, the ideas and ideals of the great masterpieces of Jewish literature, and to those who want to learn of the uninterrupted process of the literary creation of the Jewish people, adequate information, as well as a coördinated conception of the ramifications of the intellectual and spiritual activity of Jewry during the long post-Biblical period, is the aim of this book. The work may also serve as text or reference book for all students in Jewish theological schools, teachers seminaries and departments of Jewish studies in universities.

The aim the author had in mind was deemed by him worthy enough to brave all the difficulties and haphazardness connected with such a work and make the attempt. How far he succeeded in fulfilling such aim is not for him to say, but he will patiently await the judgment of the readers.

The aim determined also the character of the work. While the facts and data were obtained, sifted and tested, in accordance with the rules of scholarly research, the presentation of the content is done in a non-technical manner. For this reason, notes were reduced to a minimum, and the discussion of moot questions left out. Furthermore, in order to make the book accessible to all those who are not conversant with Hebrew, all Hebrew phrases and titles of books were transliterated. All such technical matters were left for a future special edition, if such will be possible.

But the reader who wants to continue his research in any branch of Jewish literature will find help and guidance by consulting the selected bibliography given at the end of the book. It is limited to selected books and articles, for a complete bibliography on such an extensive subject would occupy a volume in itself.

Of the two methods available for the presentation of the content, namely the chronological one and that of treating each branch of literature separately, the author chose the latter. Literature is an organic thing and while the various organs make up one whole, each organ or branch possesses an individuality of its own and the whole can best be conceived through a study of the parts. This method has, of course its disadvantages, for the reader may have to consult several chapters before he gets a fair conception of the literary activity of a Saadia or a Maimonides, but its advantages far outweigh the drawbacks.

It was originally planned to publish this work in two volumes simultaneously. But difficulties experienced in putting out a scholarly work of such magnitude made it advisable to have the volumes appear separately, especially since this volume, though a part of a larger work, can also be considered an independent work. It is hoped by the author that the second volume will appear within a short time after the first.

The author wishes to acknowledge his gratitude to all those who were in any way helpful to him during the course of the preparation of this book. His thanks are due to Mr. Adolph S. Oko the Librarian of the Hebrew Union College Library who has generously supplied him with the necessary books for a period of three years, and without whose assistance the work could not have been accomplished, to Dr. Joshua Bloch, chief of the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, for his kind services in supplying the photostats used for illustration, to Rabbi Leonard C. Mishkin, his friend and former student, for his great assistance in preparing the index, to Mr. David Shapiro, for putting into rhyme several of the poetic selections given in the chapter on poetry, to Mr. Benjamin Meyer, for drawing the map accompanying this volume, and finally to his wife, who read the proofs and made valuable suggestions as to style and arrangement.

He is also greatly indebted to his friends, who came to his assistance in procuring funds for the partial subsidy which enabled the publishers to put out this work. These are: the Littauer fund of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Drs. Solomon Goldman, Louis L. Mann, Solomon Freehof, Jacob Singer of Chicago, and Dr. H. G. Enelow of New York.

MEYER WAXMAN.

Chicago, August 1930.

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INTRODUCTION

The literature of a people is very often described as the mirror of its soul. In it are reflected its strivings and desires, its expressions and ideals, its failures and achievements. The relation of history to literature is like unto the relation of the external action to the inner motive. Whatever actions and deeds a people performed, in the course of its history, were prompted by the ideals and emotions expressed in its literature, while the mere records of these acts and deeds are known as history. History without literature is, therefore, only a dry chronicle of the past life of a people. It is the literature which supplies the glow of emotion, the warmth of passion, the intelligent meaning, the connecting link to the dry series of facts and breathes into it the very breath of life, so that the past life of the particular nation rises before us as in a vision.

And if this is to be said about the literature of any historical people, so much more should the dictum be applied to Jewish literature, the mirror of the soul of that people which had long been named the "People of the Book," a people that has left but little of other permanent monuments except books, one to whom the book was a portable fatherland for many centuries. To try to understand the history of the Jews without at least a fair acquaintance with the various phases of Jewish literature is an impossibility, as it forms the very woof of which the history of this people is woven.

However, a better understanding of Jewish history is not the only compensation awaiting the student of Jewish literature. There is a higher reward in store for the toiler in this field, and that is the saturation with the beauty and fascinating charm pervading this mass of literary productions of the Jewish genius.

Post-Biblical Jewish literature is a great, wide garden, a veritable "Garden of God." In it are found the strangest and most exotic plants, culled from all lands and all climes. There, contrary to Kipling, East meets West, Jew meets Greek and a host of his successors, Roman, Arab, and all Western nations. It is a point where the spirits of all nations, which left their mark on the history of human development, commingle, and is the scene of a great spiritual panorama which has the world for its background, where the echo of all centuries and all lands is heard. It is a literature without geographic boundaries, one which grew luxuriously on the shores of the rivers of Babylon, on the banks of the Jordan, bloomed most beautifully by the rivers Tagus and Gaudalquivir (Spain and Portugal), and flourished with equal vigor on the Rhine, the Vistula, and the Dnieper.

In Jewish literature, Judaism becomes conscious of its power, and expresses itself in many ways and forms. It is true that the great bulk of that massive and voluminous literature has a religious coloring, but it is not the spirit of dogmatic religion which is embodied in its pages, but the spirit of a religion which is bubbling with life, seething with emotion, and revealing the many-sidedness of the human soul. Law has its place in that literature, and a prominent one at that, for it formed for a long time the backbone of Judaism, the shelter which protected it from many storms, still the other aspects of religion were not neglected by it; they too find their place there. In the pages of this literature, we feel the deepest expression of the yearning for God, of the longing of the soul for the Infinite, of the hope of the individual for a future life, and of the cry of a martyred people for a Messiah, a redeemer. It is all there in the long list of books known as Apocrypha, Apocalyptic, Agada, and Midrashim. And when the experiences of the nation accumulated, and in their turn clamored for expression, we have, as a result, books on history. Again, when life in general, and Jewish life in particular, became tinged with earnestness and assumed a more speculative aspect, this phase also found its expression in philosophy and ethics.

As we speed through the centuries, we encounter new currents of literary activity. The ancient lyre of Israel is struck again, and new chords are emitted by a host of singers both religious and secular. It is the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry when Jew meets Arab and cultures mingle, wide vistas and new avenues of expression open up, and science, philosophy, grammar, and lexicography come and take their place side by side with Halakah and Agada. And simultaneously, almost stealthily and unnoticed, there rises to full bloom the exotic plant of mysticism known as Kabbala. Thus, the kaleidoscopic picture changes through the ages, and through these metamorphisms tells the wonderful story of Judaism.

MAP OF JEWISH LITERARY CENTERS DURING THE AGES

On the following map, the reader can see at a glance the countries and cities which, at one time or another, served as centers of Jewish literature.

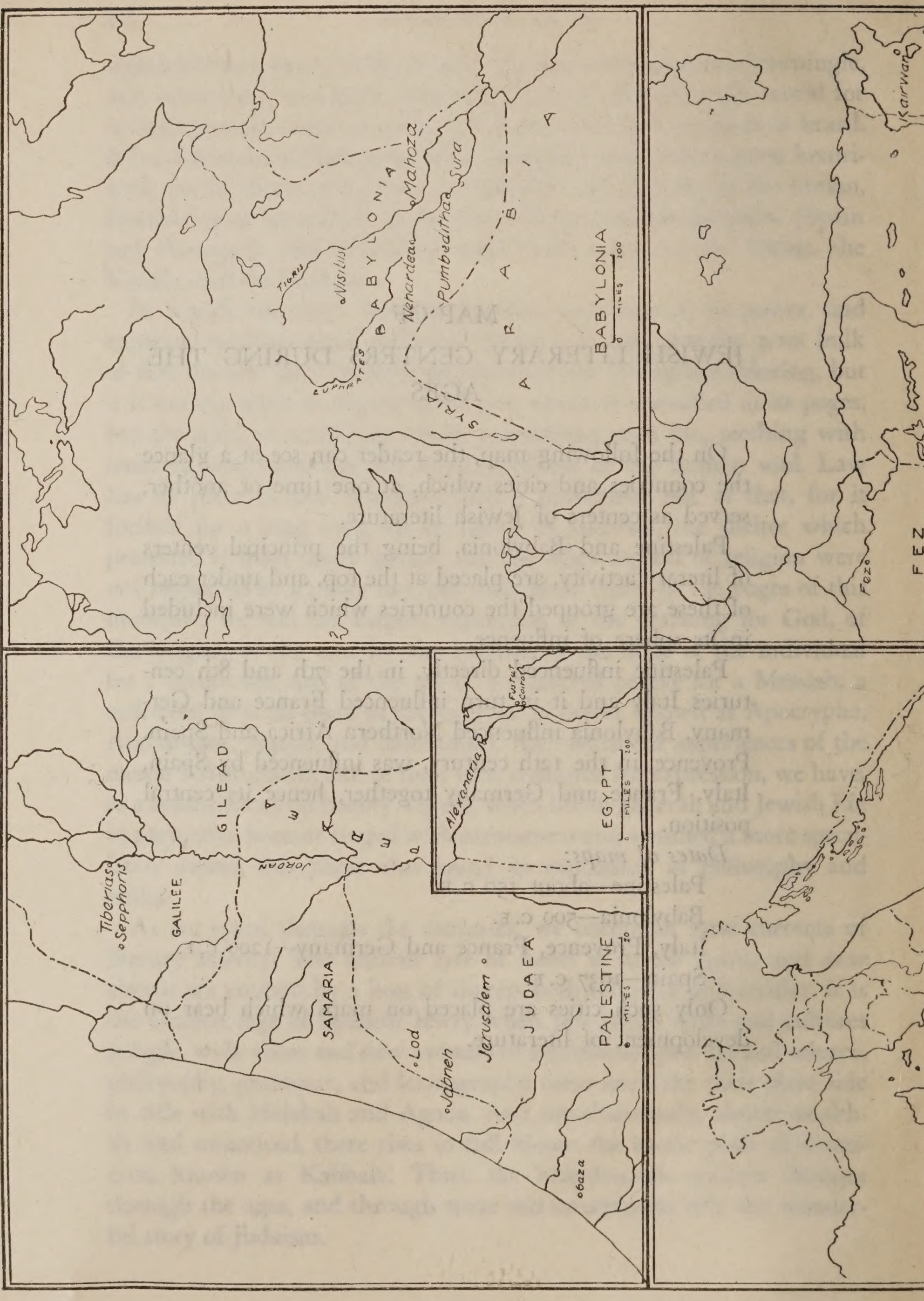
Palestine and Babylonia, being the principal centers of literary activity, are placed at the top, and under each of these are grouped the countries which were included in its sphere of influence.

Palestine influenced directly, in the 7th and 8th centuries Italy and it in turn influenced France and Germany. Babylonia influenced Northern Africa and Spain. Provence, in the 12th century, was influenced by Spain, Italy, France and Germany together, hence its central position.

Dates of maps:

Palestine—about 150 C. E.
Babylonia—500 C. E.
Italy, Provence, France and Germany—1200 C. E.
Spain—1037 C. E.

Only such cities are placed on maps which bear on development of literature.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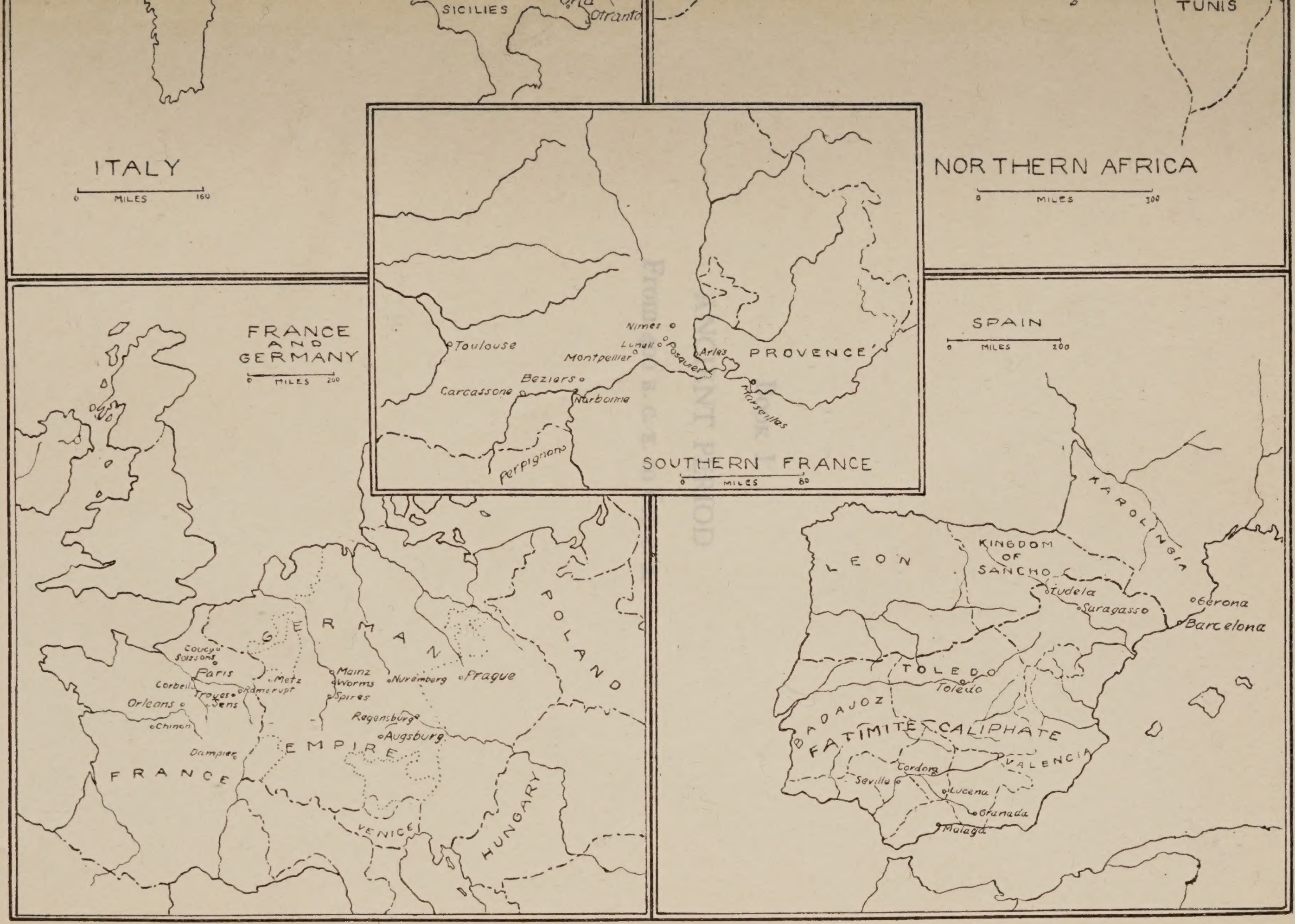
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Lucena
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Book I

ANCIENT PERIOD

From 400 B. C. E. to 600 C. E.

ANCIENT PERIOD

Chapter I

APOCRYPHAL AND APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

1. GENERAL FEATURES

The first stage of Post-Biblical Jewish literature consists of the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic books. This literature fills the gap between the Bible and the Mishnah, or to be more exact, the other forms of Halakic and Agadic literature, the compilation and organization of which began somewhat earlier than the Mishnah, say about the close of the first century after the destruction of the Temple which corresponds to the middle of the second century of the common era. To the Christians, it forms the link between the Old and the New Testaments. The period of this kind of literary activity extends for about three centuries, namely, from 200 B. C. E. to about 100 C. E. In view of the fact that the canon of the Old Testament was closed about 250 B. C. E., we have then a continuous activity of the genius of Israel without interruption.

In fact, it was really intended by the writers of this literature to be a continuation of the Bible, inasmuch as it follows along the same lines. As it is known, the Bible consists of several divisions, law, history written with a moral purpose, prophecy, religious poetry, both lyric and didactic, and reflective writings. With the exception of the element of law which is scantily represented in this kind of literature, all the other elements find there adequate representation.

The name Apocrypha given to a part of this literature is derived from the Greek word Απόκρὑφος which means hidden away or secret. The term, though, seems to have been applied to this group of books in three different usages. First, in the sense of having been excluded from the canon of the Old Testament, for, with the close of that canon, no more books were added to it, and all other books which were written either after the close or even before, but were not considered, for some reason or other, worthy to be included in the authorized collection, were designated as Hitzonim—i. e. external. In time, these excluded books were not as widely circulated as the canonical and were found only in the hands of a few, hence the name Apocrypha, hidden on account of their rarity.[1] Second, it was used in the sense of being hidden away from the eyes of the masses on account of the sacred teaching and the mystic and exotic character of some of them. Later, the name was applied to the whole group even to the historical books. Third, the name *hidden* was applied because some of the books were attributed by the writers to personages of Biblical fame, either to prophets, such as The Epistle of Jeremiah, The Book of Baruch, or even to Solomon, such as The Wisdom of Solomon, or as in some of the Apocalyptic writings, which as a rule were a part of this literature, to Abraham, Enoch, etc., and their distant origin was usually explained by the fact that they were hidden away during the generations until the appointed time for their revelation came.

The name Apocalypse is really another word for revelation, and Apocalyptic means revealed. The books named Apocalyptic are akin to the prophetic books of the Bible, especially to certain portions of some of them, such as Daniel and Zacharia. Apocalypse and Apocalyptic books differ from prophecy and prophetic books not only by the fact that they are not divinely inspired but also by a number of external characteristics which can be subsumed under the following heads: (*a*) Inasmuch as the prophet dwelt on the conditions of the present, interpreting current history with the purpose of disclosing the divine forces at work, the Apocalypsist speaks almost entirely of the future, disparaging the present. (*b*) In the prophetic books, symbols are only occasionally used as a means of enforcing the message; in the Apocalyptic books allegory occupies the most important place and a regular symbolic machinery, in which animal symbols predominate, is built up. (*c*) Prophecy openly avows the name of the author; Apocalypse hides under the names of men of antiquity—hence it is mostly pseudo-epigraphic—rewrites the past in the name of some hero and places in his mouth a vision of the future expecting its fulfillment.

Yet, though this kind of literature is usually separated into two divisions, Apocryphal and Apocalyptic, there is really no fast line separating them. In some collections of the Apocrypha, such as the one in the English Bible, IV Ezdras is included, while by its content and tone it really belongs to the Apocalyptic division. On the other hand, the Book of Jubilees should be classed rather as Apocryphal than Apocalyptic.

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[1] In accordance with this derivative meaning, a new Hebrew term was coined for these books—Genuzim instead of Hitzonim, i. e. hidden or stored away, and the verb ganoz came to be used to denote the exclusion of books from the canon. Cf. Babli Sabbath 13B.

2. *TIME AND SPIRIT OF THIS LITERATURE*

To understand this kind of literature, we must know the time in which it was produced and the spirit by which it was permeated. As stated above, the period of its production extends from 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E. This period was on the whole one of tribulation, of suffering, strife, and subjection, with only a short span of rest and prosperity. It began with the entrance of the Jews under the dominion of the Graeco-Syrian Empire, and ended with the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion, embracing, in its midst, the years of the Hasmonean struggle as well as the eight decades of peace under the rule of the princes of that house. In general, the second Commonwealth of the Jews presents a sorry spectacle, and in no way approaches the glories presaged by the older prophets nor even those foretold by the later, such as Haggai and Zachariah. This political background which presented a sharp incongruity between the future portrayed by the prophets and that of the present, coupled with other factors, gave rise to a number of features which together make up the peculiar spirit of this literature. These features are as follows. (*a*) Moved by deep belief that the promises of the prophets must be fulfilled, contrary state of the present notwithstanding, the heart of the faithful yearned for a better future, and the hope for it became to all who were dissatisfied with the present, a passionate longing. No wonder then, that the old Messianic idea forms a leading note in this literature which treats primarily with the future.

(*b*) The other leading feature is the zeal for the Law of God. The people of Israel, from the time of Ezra on, was transformed from a people struggling towards religion into the religious people par excellence, the Law—Torah—became all important, the very center of life. This zeal for the Law found multifarious expression in Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature. On the whole, though, it may be said that the zeal for the Law is expressed mainly in the Apocrypha, while the hope for the future is the primary motive in the Apocalyptic books. However, the lines are not fast drawn. Both of them were practical. The Apocrypha taught the way of life through Law, while the Apocalyptic books offered consolation to the sufferers of the present.

(*c*) Another feature which is quite prominent in this literature is the reward of the individual. In Biblical times,—though it is my personal opinion that the individual did occupy a more prominent place in the religious scheme of the time, than it is generally assumed—the place of the individual and his hopes and strivings were very often repressed by the hope for the future destiny of the nation as a whole. At all events, the theory that the righteous were rewarded and the wicked punished was mostly expressed in terms of prosperity and suffering in this world. True, the doctrines of a future life of the individual as well as that of resurrection are referred to several times by the prophets and also in the book of Job, but these doctrines seem to have been the share of the few and not that of the masses. For, whether it was due to the reason that the prophets addressed themselves to the masses, and therefore spoke in terms of their conception of reward and punishment which was a worldly one, or to any other cause, the fact is that these doctrines were not sufficiently emphasized by them.

As years passed by, the theory of the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked in this world was put to test, and it was found wanting. Life did not bear it out, as it was full of examples to the contrary, the righteous suffered and the wicked prospered. And little by little, the problem arose, why and wherefore? Jeremiah already had asked the question, "Why is the way of the wicked successful?" (Jer. XII, 1). The problem reached its highest point in the book of Job, where it was dealt with on a large scale but no satisfactory solution was reached. References in the book to the hope of life after death are few and far between. As times changed and the individual came more and more into his own, during the first centuries of the second Commonwealth, and added to this, there came the persecutions of the righteous in the time of the Syro-Greek rule, especially under Antiochus Epiphanes, the problem, in view of the thousands of *Hassidim,* pious men, going down to an ignominious death, became exceedingly acute. Then, the old solution which was hitherto indistinct, pressed forward, namely, that the reward of the righteous will not come in this world but in the world after death, and the punishment of the wicked was likewise postponed to that world. Thus, the old theory of the immortality of the soul of the individual and its reward and punishment in the hereafter became prevalent, and striking deep roots in the hearts of the people found passionate expression in this literature.

(*d*) There is yet a fourth idea which affects both the individual and the nation and which was destined to become a central point in Apocalyptic literature, and that is resurrection. This idea is a kind of synthesis into which the future hope of the nation, i. e. the Messianic kingdom, and the hope of the individual coalesce. Not only will all the righteous men living at the time of the advent of the Messiah participate in its blessings, but also all the righteous men of the past will be resurrected and participate in the blessings of the great event. And thus, the righteous individual receives an additional compensation besides his reward after death, namely, the promise of a return to life at the time when his nation will be happy and blessed. In this doctrine, the good of the individual and the happiness of the nation meet.

To recapitulate, we have four great motives which underlie the spirit that prompted and animated this mass of literature which developed within three centuries, from the beginning of the second century B. C. E. to 100 C. E., the formative period of Judaism as we know it today. The first motive is to inculcate faith in the blessed future of the nation promised by the prophets of old, i. e. Messianic times, which was still unfulfilled, and which the conditions of the time were constantly relegating to a more distant future.

The second, a very important feature, is the zeal for the Law which became all-inclusive and all-embracing in the life of the Jew during that period. The need for inculcating that zeal received a constant impetus from the great conflict with Hellenism in which Judaism was engaged, especially with Hellenizing sects within Israel proper. All devices were used in the defense of the Law or the Torah, historical narratives, moral tales, collections of reflective proverbs, epigrams and aphorisms, all of which proved the superiority of the Torah over other paths and philosophies of life. This part of the task was mostly performed by the Apocrypha.

The third and fourth are to clarify and propagate the idea of the compensation of the righteous and punishment of the wicked in the life after death, thereby consoling the individual, as well as to paint the glorious time of the future when happiness will come to the nation and the righteous will rise to participate in that happiness.

The picture, however, will not be complete unless we add two more essential features which are (*1*) the last judgment, (2) and the Kingdom of God. Both of these ideas are of prophetic origin, the great judgment or, to call it by its Biblical name, the Day of God, is given a good deal of attention by Isaiah, Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, and Zechariah. Likewise is the Kingdom of God, i. e. the age when the knowledge of God will cover the earth, and He will be proclaimed king everywhere, frequently spoken of by the prophets. But not only are they not clearly defined by them and are subjected to various interpretations, such that the judgment is only partial, either of Israel (as in the case of Amos) or of the nations that oppressed Israel, but also, in prophetic utterances, these two ideas are not connected (except probably in Isaiah Ch. II).

During the period we are dealing with, though, these two ideas became the central points and an integral part of the great hope for a better future, or the Messianic age. Besides, they were broadened and inherently connected with each other. The judgment of God became the last judgment of all men, Jews and Gentiles alike. And this "general assize" will be immediately followed by the introduction of the Kingdom of God. The last idea in itself became more complex, inasmuch as it included various elements. It meant, on the one hand, the inauguration of a glorious time and the establishment of Israel as a nation of supermen. But, on the other hand, it also meant the extension of the rule and knowledge of God among mankind as a whole, and the supremacy of the Saints. The last conception is more spiritual and even in its very beginning contained germs of a dangerous tendency for Judaism. On the whole, the two notions are not clearly separated from each other and are often given in the books one beside the other. But when the latter, namely, the more spiritualized conception of the Kingdom of God, began to prevail, Jewish leaders took alarm, and this is probably the cause of the rejection by the Jewish authorities of the entire literature as will be explained later (Cf. Sect. 20).

Finally, there is the aspect of the Greek influence upon this literature which requires us to take into account its relation to Greek culture and spirit. Many of the books are not only permeated with borrowed Greek ideas which were, of course, Judaized and given a different form, but were also written in Greek, and very often outside of Palestine, namely, in Egypt where Greek was the vernacular used by the Jews. It was there, where the conflict between Judaism and Hellenism raged in its most intense form, that defense was most needed. As a result, a good number of those books assumed an apologetic and polemic character. And as in all apologetics and polemics, there is a conscious and unconscious tendency in these books to adjust more or less the ideas of the writer to the ideas of the other side from which he defends himself or which he attacks. In the case of apologetics especially, there is an endeavor to show that there is really no essential difference between the two sets of ideas and that the difference consists only in form.

Hence, we have in this kind of literature the extensive use of symbol and allegory which intends to empty the solid content of religious ideas and fill them with a more plastic one, and hence also the prevalent use of interpretation of Biblical verses or even precepts, in a different manner than the adopted one. All this makes this literature different from the great collections of authoritative books, the Bible and the Talmud, when they happen to deal with the same subject. Yet a large part of this literature, especially of the Apocrypha, was only slightly affected by Greek ideas as far as the content of the thought is concerned, so that after all, they are fine examples of pure Jewish thought and feeling and should be considered as such.

3. *APOCRYPHAL BOOKS*

The Apocrypha are divided according to their nature and character into four classes. (*a*) Historical Books. (*b*) Legendary and Moral Fiction. (*c*) Prophetical and Poetic Writings. (*d*) Didactic. We have then accordingly the following list:

(*a*) *Historical Books*

1) I, or III Ezra
2) I Maccabees
3) II Maccabees
4) III Maccabees

(*b*) *Legendary and Moral Fiction*

5) Tobit
6) Judith
7) Bel and the Dragon (Additions to Daniel)
8) Susanna
9) Additions to Esther

(*c*) *Prophetic and Poetic Writings*

10) Prayer of Azariah and Song of Three Children
11) Prayer of Manasses
12) Book of Baruch
13) Epistle of Jeremiah

(*d*) *Didactic*

14) Wisdom of Sirach
15) Wisdom of Solomon
16) IV Maccabees

(a) HISTORICAL

4. *I EZRA*

This book which is designated as I Ezra by the Septuagint, i. e. the Greek translation of the Bible, and III Ezra by the Vulgate, i. e. the standard Latin translation should, according to its content, be considered first, inasmuch as it deals with the early history of the Second

Commonwealth. It practically covers the same historical events contained in the Biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah with some additions. The additions are as follows: (*a*) It begins with the story of the Passover celebrated by King Josiah and relates the succeeding events up to the destruction of the first Temple. In this narrative, it follows closely II Chronicles, Chs. XXXV, XXXVI, 1–26. (*b*) Chs. III–V, 4 of this book contain an entirely new version of the rise of Zerubbabel as the leader of the Jews. It tells, how he, when a page in the service of King Darius, competed with two others in uttering sayings of wisdom and was declared to be the wisest of the three. The contest between the pages turned on the question as to what is the strongest power in the world.

One wrote wine is the strongest; the other wrote, the king; Zerubbabel wrote, women are the strongest but "above all truth beareth away victory." His answer was declared the best. On being asked to name his reward, Zerubbabel expressed his desire to be sent to Jerusalem to help build the city and Temple. His request was granted, and he was sent to Jerusalem to head the work of restoration.

Josephus had evidently seen I Ezra for he repeats the story of the rise of Zerubbabel verbatim. This version of the coming of Zerubbabel stands in contradiction with our canonical book of Ezra according to which Zerubbabel came to Jerusalem with the first settlers in the time of Cyrus, while according to I Ezra, Zerubbabel was still in Babylon at the beginning of the reign of Darius, namely, in 522, and did not go to Jerusalem probably until 520. The writer was, as it seems, primarily interested in Ezra, as he does not mention Nehemiah, and the part of the story, to which we find a parallel in the canonical book of Nehemiah, namely, I Ezra Ch. IX, 37–55 which otherwise agrees with Nehemiah Chs. VII, 73–VIII, 13 deals only with the reading of the Law by Ezra, while the name of Nehemiah is omitted.

The date of the book is indefinite. It is not later than 100 C. E. for it was used by Josephus, but it is most likely much older, as it might even have been written in the third century B. C. E. Its original language was most likely Hebrew or Aramaic. It is now found only in Greek, Latin, and Syriac versions.

5. *I MACCABEES*

This book covers the history of a period of forty years, from the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes (175 B. C. E.) to the death of Simon

Maccabee (135). It is the chief historical source we have for the Jewish struggle for religious and civil independence during this period. It is prefaced with a brief sketch of the story of the conquest of Alexander, the division of his empire, the rule of the Syrians, and the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes. It also recites very briefly the events preceding the revolt, the treachery of the Hellenist party, the despoiling of the city and the Temple, and the efforts of Antiochus to destroy the religion and nationality of the Jew. After this introduction, it proceeds to tell of the uprising of Mattathias, the struggles of Judah and Jonathan and closes with a detailed account of the reign of Simon and a brief reference to John Hyrcanus. It is quite possible that there existed short notices of the Maccabean deeds which served our author as sources.

It is impossible to assume otherwise, namely, that one who lived about two generations after Judah could remember the events so minutely, for the author lived not earlier than the reign of Hyrcanus. The book contains also a number of official documents such as letters from Jonathan to the King of Sparta, and from the King to him (Ch. XII, 6–18; XII, 20–22), a copy of the Treaty of Alliance concluded in the time of Judah Maccabee between Rome and the Jews (VIII, 22–32) and others. The preservation of these documents goes to prove that records were kept in some kind of archive of the most important events which transpired, and it is these records which, as surmised, served as the sources for the writer of I Maccabees.

The standpoint of the author is that of orthodox legal Judaism. Yet it is written in a very rational way, nowhere is the victory attributed to supernatural intervention, but credit is given to the skill of the military leaders and their wisdom. It is, of course, emphasized that these princes act with an unshaken trust in God. The author shows great historical skill in picturing the period by putting discourses into the mouths of his heroes. It is very fortunate that he used a definite era in his dating; this is the Seleucidion era beginning in the year 312 B.C.E. the date of the victory of Seleucus over Antigonus.

The time of its composition seems to have been between 137–105 B.C.E. It was written originally in Hebrew, as the grammatical peculiarities indicate, and in addition we have the testimony of Jerome and Origen for the existence of a Hebrew original. Origen even says that he saw a copy of the Hebrew text. Its original title was probably *Sepher Beth Hashmonai*. It has come down to us in the Greek and was preserved by the fact that it was incorporated in the Greek Bible. It is very strange that it does not refer to the immortality of the soul nor to the resurrection of the dead in such places where reference to these matters would have been in place. It has, therefore, been concluded that the writer belonged to the Sadducean party who were deeply religious, but did not accept these doctrines. This conclusion, however, should be taken with reserve, as the omission of the mention of these doctrines might have been due to other causes such as the writer as a historian was primarily interested in merely narrating the events, and not in stating doctrines.

6. II MACCABEES

The second book of Maccabees, according to the testimony of its author is an abridgment of a longer history written by Jason of Cyrene. It is prefaced by two letters written by the Jews of Jerusalem to the Jews of Alexandria urging them to observe the Feast of Dedication, (Hanukah) and meanwhile telling them a story about the holy fire of the Altar, how it was hidden at the time of the exile, and how it was discovered by Nehemiah.

The epitome itself relates the events of fifteen years from the attempted despoliation of the Temple by Heliodorus, the treasurer of Seleucus IV (175 B.C.E.), to the death of Nicanor (161 B.C.E.). The events related in it are, of course, similar to those told in the first book. But the narrative differs in many particulars and sometimes in the very order of events. There is a copiousness of detail, especially in the preliminary history of the Maccabean rising. It is possible that Jason derived his history from the lips of contemporaries and not from written records, for the book abounds with inaccuracies. Jason then must have written his book shortly after 160 B.C.E. II Maccabees differs greatly from I Maccabees in the mode of narrating. It includes the supernatural elements, as, for instance, the story of the intervention of angels in preventing Heliodorus from carrying out the despoliation of the Temple. It is distinguished by several stories exalting the martyrdom of the Hassidim, the pious, such as that of Eliezer (Ch. VI) and that of Hannah [2] and her seven children (Ch. VII). These embellished stories are told with the express purpose of arousing the spirit of devotion to the

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[2] The name Hannah by which the mother is usually called is not given in our book, and similarly, several Talmudic and Midrashic sources simply call her the mother, or the widow. Another Mediæval source calls her Miriam, daughter of Nachtom (Midrash to Lamentations Ch. 1, 50). But the Jossipon, a Mediæval historical book, calls the martyred mother Hannah and this name was adopted.

Torah and the faith of the Fathers by inspiring emulation of the deeds of the former saints and heroes. There are several references in the book to the resurrection of the dead (Ch. XII, 59) and the gathering of the dispersion (Kibutz Galuioth). It was therefore written by a Pharisee. We are, though, at a loss to understand why the narrator breaks off with the victory of Judah over Nicanor. Perhaps, Jason intended to continue the story at some other time.

The date of the composition of this epitome cannot be fixed definitely but it is to be placed between the years 108 and 50 B. C. E. at any rate not later than that year. It was undoubtedly written in Greek by an Egyptian Jew as its fine Greek rhetorical style indicates.

7. III MACCABEES

The third book of Maccabees, in spite of its name, has nothing to do with the Maccabean struggle and can really be considered historical only in form. In reality, it is a piece of fiction founded on an unascertainable historical fact. Its content is as follows: Ptolemy IV, after his victory over Antiochus the Great (217 B. C. E.) comes to Jerusalem and desires to enter the Temple. The Jews entreat him not to do so, but he insists, enters the Temple and is struck by the hand of God. On returning to Egypt, he wishes to wreak his vengeance upon the Jews. At first, he deprives them of their rights, and finally commands that they should be brought to Alexandria in chains. Ptolemy then orders that five hundred elephants be intoxicated and set upon the Jews. When everything is ready and the king approaches the race course with his troops, two angels appear and strike the elephants with terror, so that instead of turning upon the Jews as they were supposed to do, they turn upon the king's troops. As a result, the king changed his mind and ordered the liberation of the Jews, and henceforth bestowed favors upon them.

We do not know the authenticity of these facts. It is probably based on the story told by Josephus (Against Apion II, 5) about Ptolemy VII (146–117 B. C. E.) who wanted to act towards the Jews of Alexandria who were his political opponents, in a similar manner and whose attempt ended with similar results. It is possible that the story was composed at the time of the first persecution against the Jews under Caligula about 30 C. E., but this again is not certain as there are no references in the book to the character of Caligula. Its date cannot therefore be ascertained. At the earliest, it may be placed in the first century B. C. E. Its purpose was like that of all books of this kind of literature, namely, to extol the greatness of God in preserving His people from the hands of their enemies, and thus encourage them in their difficult task of battling for the existence of Judaism. A feast for the commemoration of such an event was observed in Alexandria. The original language of the book was Greek.

(b) LEGENDARY AND MORAL FICTION

8. *THE BOOK OF TOBIT*

The book, Tobit, is a moral story which intends to inculcate in us the virtues of honoring the dead and the giving of alms. It aims primarily at the individual and deals with the biography of a pious man named Tobit. The scene of the story is Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Tobit was a captive Jew who was brought there by Shalmaneser together with all exiles from Israel in 722 B. C. E. He settled in Nineveh and lived there quite happily with his wife Hannah and his son Tobias. He performed good deeds, gave alms, buried the dead, and clothed the naked. Once, after performing a kind deed, he lay down to sleep in the open air when sparrow's dung fell into his eyes and he was blinded. It was a sore trial for him, for he became poor and all his friends left him while his wife mocked at his good deeds and asked him pertinently where was his reward.

Meanwhile, Tobit remembered that a certain Gabael in Rages, Media, owes him money and he sends his son Tobias to collect it. In Ecbatane, there lived a Jew, Raguel, who had a daughter named Sarah who had been married to seven husbands but all had died on the wedding night through the agency of an evil spirit, named Asmodeus. On the way to Rages which passed through Ecbatane, Tobias is joined by a fellow traveler, who is no other than the angel Raphael, sent by God both to heal Tobit and to help Sarah in her plight. While traveling together, Tobias bathes in the Tigris and catches a fish, and at the direction of the angel, he takes out the heart, liver, and gall of the fish and preserves them. Coming to Ecbatane, Raguel recognizes him as the son of his friend Tobit, and at the advice of the disguised angel, he offers him, reluctantly though, his daughter in marriage. On entering the bridal chamber, Tobias, at the suggestion of the angel burns the liver and heart of the fish, the smoke of which drives away the evil spirit. Contrary to the expectations of the parents of the bride, the couple are found safe and sound in the morning. Great joy reigns in the house of Raguel, and Tobias remains at the home of his father-in-law for fourteen days, the disguised angel having meanwhile gone to collect the money from Gabael. At the termination of the fourteen days of festivity, Tobias and his wife return home, and with the gall of the fish, he cures his father's blindness. Tobit praises God for restoring his sight and lives after that one hundred years more, his life being in all one hundred sixty-six years. He is thus rewarded for his kindness.

The plot is well laid and is skillfully interwoven. Emphasis is laid upon observance of the Law, but superstition forms an important element. It seems that the purpose of the author was to encourage the Jews of the diaspora and to strengthen their hearts in the observance of the Law.

The date can be tolerably fixed within wide limits. It was written before the Temple of Herod was built, which was about 20 B.C.E.,[3] and we can go back about a century and a half, so that the date for the composition of the book ranges between 190 and 20 B.C.E. It has even been advanced that the book was written in Egypt at the close of the third century B.C.E. by a pious Jew. The original language must have been Aramaic. There is still an Aramaic text in existence.

9. BOOK OF JUDITH

This book belongs to the kind of literature classed as historical fiction written with a certain tendency in view. It is possible that the author of this story intended that it be regarded as founded on fact, but the object in view was not to really impart historical information as to use the story as a vehicle for conveying moral and religious lessons and exhortations. From the incident narrated which is supposed to have been taken from Jewish history, the reader is to learn that the fear of the Lord is the highest wisdom, for He delivers His children in some wonderful way, though He may bring them for a time unto trial.

Its plot is as follows: Nebuchadnezzar, king of Assyria, decides to chastise the people of Palestine because they disobeyed his commands to furnish him with troops in his war against Arphaxad, king of Media. He sends his general Holofernes, into Judea to carry out his command.

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[3] Ch. XIV, 5 speaks of the Temple that will be built,—which really means the one that the author knew,—that it will be inferior to the first Temple, i. e. that of Solomon. The Temple spoken of as inferior could only be that of Zerubbabel which was rather a small affair. The Temple of Herod, on the other hand, was a wonderful structure surpassing the Solomonic in beauty and grandeur. Hence, we must conclude that the author did not see Herod's Temple, so consequently, the book was written before 20 B. C. E.

As the Jews hear of his approach, they all rally to offer resistance and decide to meet his forces at Bethulia, a fortress near Esdraelon. Holofernes then besieges Bethulia. After a short time, the distress in the city became acute, and a beautiful and pious widow, Judith, undertakes to save her people by an act of daring. She gains entrance into the enemy's camp and charms the very general with her beauty. After three days, she is invited to a banquet at which Holofernes drinks to excess, and she then finds her opportunity. Seizing his own scimitar, she cuts off his head and manages to escape from camp with her ghastly trophy. In the morning, when the enemy discovers the death of the general, they flee and are destroyed by the Jews. Judith is thus hailed as the deliverer of Israel.

The tendency of the book is clear. It was written for the purpose of arousing the spirit of nationalism and patriotism in a time of national calamity. The question arises as to its historicity, as the book is full of errors. It makes Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria at the time when Assyria was no more in existence, since it speaks of the Jews as having just returned from captivity. Nor is the name of Bethulia ever found in the list of the cities of Palestine. Some scholars attempted to identify Nebuchadnezzar with Antiochus, and Assyria with Syria, and believed the story to refer to Antiochus' persecution. Others advanced the theory that the work was suggested by the campaign of Artexerxes Ochus, 350 B. C. E. against Egypt and Palestine, conducted by two generals, Holofernes and Bagoas, who, likewise, play a part in the book of Judith. Be it as it may, it is most probable that the book was written not later than the last quarter of the second century B. C. E. as all circumstances indicate that it belongs to the Greek period. The book was written either in Hebrew or Aramaic. Jerome states in his preface to the Latin version of the book that he had before him an Aramaic text of which the Greek is a translation. The standpoint of the author is thoroughly Pharasaic, as Judith is praised for the scrupulous care she took with regard to food as well as other observances.

10. BEL AND THE DRAGON (Additions to Daniel)

There are a number of stories clustering around Daniel and the events related in the book bearing his name. They were supposed to be additions to the book and are really included in the Septuagint. To these additions belong also the two stories of Bel and the Dragon. The first tells how Daniel convinced Cyrus that it is foolish to worship the god

Bel who is merely an image but not a living God. The king argued that Bel is a mighty and powerful god, for he consumes daily a vast amount of food placed on his table. Daniel undertook to prove to the king that it is not Bel who consumes this food but somebody else. He spread ashes on the floor of the temple, and in the morning the traces of many footsteps were clearly seen in them. This was sufficient proof that the priests came in through a secret passage together with their families and consumed Bel's food. Cyrus then praised Daniel for his wisdom and rewarded him with many gifts.

The second story tells how Daniel killed the Dragon, worshipped by the Persians, by means of a device and was thrown into the den of the lions as a punishment for his act. He was, however, saved from them by an angel of God. Both stories were most likely written in Hebrew.

11. SUSANNA

The story of Susanna was placed in some editions of the Septuagint at the beginning of the book of Daniel. It tells of a certain woman Susanna (Hebrew Shoshanna) who was falsely accused of unchastity by two wicked elders of the community and was brought to trial and convicted, but the clever youth, Daniel, intervened and by skillful examination of the witnesses proved the falsity of the accusation. The scene, of course, is laid in Babylon in the days of captivity. The first half of the story is based on a certain tradition about two wicked elders in Babylon who practiced the seduction of women. Reference to this tradition is also found in the Talmud (Bab. Tal. Sanhedrin 93a). The second half relates to the reform in the administration of justice which was a bone of contention between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The book was probably written between the years 90–60 B.C.E. in Hebrew or Aramaic.

12. ADDITIONS TO ESTHER

The additions to Esther form a group of six passages intended as embellishments on the canonical book of Esther, so as to make this important event in Jewish history fuller and more poetic. They were at an early time incorporated in the Septuagint version of the book of Esther, and they are still found in all Greek versions of the Bible. The old Latin Bible translation followed the Greek, and had these additions inserted in the book of Esther proper. But Jerome, in the Vulgate translation of the Old Testament, relegated them to the end of the book, numbering the passages as additional chapters of Esther from ten to sixteen, and ultimately, they were placed in the Apocrypha. Thus, they are found in the English version of the Apocrypha as a separate book, though still bearing the names of additional chapters to Esther, i. e. from one to sixteen.

The content of the six passages is as follows. (*a*) Here we are told how Mordecai saw in his dream two dragons fighting and making great noise and tumult. At their cry, all nations prepared to battle against the righteous people. At the same time, a day of darkness came upon the earth, but the righteous people cried to God and a little fountain spurted forth which ultimately turned into a flood, and upon that the darkness lifted, the sun rose, and the righteous were saved. Mordecai kept this dream in mind, and the following night he overheard the conspiracy of the two eunuchs planning to kill the king, and he informs the king of it. (This last part is told briefly in Esther Ch. II, 21–23 with slight variation.) This addition is prefixed in the Septuagint as an introduction to the book of Esther. In the Vulgate and the English Apocrypha, it is numbered Chs. XI, XII.

(*b*) This section contains the text of the edict of the king ordering, at the advice of Haman, the destruction of the Jews. In the Greek version, it follows Ch. III, verse 13 of Esther; in the Latin and English Apocrypha, it is Ch. XIII, verses 1–8.

(*c*) This contains the prayers of Mordecai and Esther, which in the Greek follow Ch. IV, verse 17 of Esther, and in the Latin and English Apocrypha it is marked Ch. XIII, verses 8–18 and Ch. XIV.

(*d*) There the appearance of Esther before the king is described which follows in the Septuagint Ch. V, 2 of Esther and is designated Ch. XV in the Apocrypha.

(*e*) This passage gives the text of the second edict of the king canceling his former order and decreeing the protection of the Jews. It is an addition to Ch. VIII of Esther and named Ch. XVI in the Apocrypha.

(*f*) Here we are given the interpretation of the dream of Mordecai mentioned in (*a*), saying that the dragon symbolized Haman and himself, and the fountain which turned into a severe flood represented Esther. In the Septuagint, it follows Ch. X and is so named in the Apocrypha. It is therefore placed, in the beginning, before the other passages, though it is really the last.

It is possible that these additions were written by different men. They seem to bear the marks of the time of the Maccabean revolt. There is a superscription in *a,* or Ch. XI, stating that these letters were interpreted by Lysimachus, son of Ptolemy of Jerusalem and were brought to Egypt by Dositheus, a Levite and priest in the fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra. As there were four kings who were named Ptolemy and who also had Cleopatras as wives, the date can not be ascertained. It is quite evident that these additions were written in Greek. The purpose was to add a more religious spirit to the rather prosaic and secular book of Esther.[4]

(c) PROPHETIC AND POETIC WRITINGS

13. PRAYER OF AZARIAS AND THE SONG OF THE THREE CHILDREN

This excellent hymn is known by various names. Some manuscripts call it the Hymn of the Father and some the Prayer of Azarias, and a large number of them call it The Song of the Three Children. It is based on the story told in the book of Daniel (Ch. III, 12–30) of the three friends of Daniel, Azarias, Chanania, and Mishoel, how they were thrown into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar for refusing to worship idols but they were saved by the intervention of angels sent by God. It forms one of the additions to the canonical book of Daniel, and contains the prayer of Azarias to God in the midst of the fiery furnace, an embellishment of the story of their rescue, and also the song of praise of the three youths together. It is quite probable that the prayer and the song were written in Hebrew as they really fall in with the text of Ch. III of Daniel. The date of composition can not be definitely determined, but from all indications, we may probably assign it to the early Maccabean period, about 165 B. C. E.

14. PRAYER OF MANASSES

To this class belongs also the short penitential prayer ascribed to Manasses, son of Hezekiah, king of Judah. Manasses is represented in the second book of Kings as one of the worst rulers that reigned over Judah, one who committed all kinds of crimes, idolatry and bloodshed included. But in II Chronicles (Ch. XXXIII, 12), it is told that the armies of Assyria took him captive and brought him to Babylon where, during his captivity, he returned to the God of his fathers, and having prayed to Him for help, he was reinstated in his kingship.

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[4] The prosaic character of Esther is attested by the fact that the name of God is not mentioned.

It seems that this prayer is based on the story told in II Chronicles and purports to be the very text used by Manasses in his plea to God. It consists of three parts: 1) Verses 1–7, a characterization of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the one who is merciful and compassionate, who appointed repentance as a means by which sinners may be saved; 2) Verses 8–10, a confession of sin; 3) Verses 11–15, a plea for forgiveness.

Both the original language and the date can not be determined definitely. Most scholars believe it was originally written in Greek and assign it a late date, even as late as 200 C. E. There are, however, a number who claim a Hebrew or Aramaic original, and believe its date to be the Maccabean period. There is much to be said in favor of this date, inasmuch as the burden of the prayer is a call to repentance, the Maccabean period would be the most suitable for such a call. It might have been written by a Palestinian Jew as a call to the Hellenist apostates to return to the God of their fathers, and Manasses was chosen as a typical penitent.

The later Agada retained a number of stories about the penitence of Manasses which shows that there were quite a number of legends current about him in Jewish circles. It is probable that they date from early times and that the prayer formed a part of the Manasses literature.

15. BOOK OF BARUCH

The book of Baruch belongs to the prophetic class of this literature. Baruch, the disciple of Jeremiah who seemed to have gone into exile, is the reputed author of the book. It falls into three parts: (*a*) Ch. I–III, 8; (*b*) Ch. III, 9–Ch. IV, 4; (*c*) Ch. IV, 5 to the end. The first part has a superscription stating that Baruch wrote this book after the first capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans when Jechonia was exiled. It was read in the presence of Jechonia and the nobles in exile who then sent it to Jerusalem together with offerings, accompanied by a request that their confession be read on the feast day. In (*b*) the cause of Israel's suffering is set forth and a short eulogy of wisdom follows; (*c*) is a consolation to the exiles and a promise of hope and restoration.

The language of the original is a moot point among the scholars. Some claim that the whole book was written in Greek, some admit that Hebrew was the original of part one, but assert that the other two parts were written in Greek. They thus assume a double authorship.

Others, though, claim a Hebrew original for the entire book. The last opinion is the most probable. Likewise, there is a difference of opinion among scholars as to its date. Some say that it was composed early in the Maccabean period about 150 B. C. E., while others place it after the destruction of the second Temple, arguing that the state of desolation in Jerusalem mentioned in part I symbolizes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. But the arguments are not well founded and we may allow the earlier date to stand.

16. THE EPISTLE OF JEREMY

The letter which was supposed to have been written by the prophet Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon is usually joined in the English version of the Apocrypha to the book of Baruch as its sixth chapter, but it is really a separate composition and was always considered as such.

Its content is as follows: Jeremiah tells the exiles that they were driven out of Palestine because of their sins and that they will remain in Babylon for seven generations. He then warns them against the idolatry of their masters lest they will be led to follow the ways of the pagans. With the warning as a starting point, he launches a bitter diatribe against paganism, against idols and their worshippers. This satire against paganism seems to be the burden of the writer.

As for its date and original language, there is a variety of opinion. One view is that it was written in Greek, in Alexandria, as an attack against heathenism and places its date to be about 70 B. C. E. But, of late, scholars have advanced proofs for a Hebrew original and are inclined to fix its date at the end of the fourth century B. C. E. According to this point of view, the Babylon referred to is the actual Babylon, and the letter itself was addressed by a Palestinian sage to the Jews of Babylon to warn them against assimilation. Against this quite plausible theory, there militates the fact that the theme of the letter is not so much the warning to the Jews as the satire against heathenism which occupies the bulk of the epistle (Verse 8–73 to the end). It should, therefore, be rather considered as a Jewish polemic against paganism which was more appropriate in Greek, and the place of composition is more probable to have been Alexandria during the first half of the first century B. C. E., when the Jews began to assert themselves not only in defense of Judaism but also in attacks on the religion of their neighbors.

(d) DIDACTIC BOOKS

17. WISDOM OF JOSHUA, SON OF SIRACH (*Ecclesiasticus*)

This book, almost the most famous of the Apocrypha, belongs to that species of Jewish literature known as wisdom writing. Three of such books, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes are included in the Old Testament canon. A few words about the Jewish conception of wisdom will, therefore, not be amiss. Wisdom, or Hokma, to the Jews never meant philosophy in the Greek sense. It never dealt with pure metaphysical problems but has a wider, and in a way a double, meaning. On the one hand, it is primarily, a philosophy of life, purporting to teach and guide the ways of action of the individual. On the other hand, it also represents or rather symbolizes the world reason which is reflected in the creative work of God, that of life and nature. As such, it not only includes the order and harmony evidenced in life and nature, but is even more, namely, their very source.

In this role, it is very often hypostatized, i. e. personified, and is almost given the guise of a personality which was present even before the creation of the world, as it says of itself, "Before the mountains were established, before the hills, was I brought forth" (Prov. VIII, 25). Of course, it is not an independent being; like all things, it is created by God, but if possible to say, His first creation, as it continues, "Then I was by Him as one brought up with Him and I was daily His delight" (Ibid. V, 30).

But, in this form, man is unable to grasp her fully, for as it is said in Job (XXVIII, 12), "But where shall wisdom be found and where is the place of understanding?" Only God Himself knows her. What is left for man to do is to follow that kind of wisdom which is within his grasp, i. e. the fear of the Lord, "For this is wisdom, and turning away from evil is understanding" (Ibid. XXVIII). Wisdom, therefore, becomes mainly, as indicated, a philosophy of life, or still better, a means of education, not only for the child but for man and woman during their whole life. As such, the current of wisdom which flowed in Jewish literature besides the prophetic and strictly religious one, becomes an all-inclusive director of life, and moral guide as well as a practical counselor in all other forms of life. Wisdom is supposed not only to show the way of good and bad, but also to lead to actual happiness. In this multifarious teaching, wisdom literature made use of the Mashal, the pointed pithy saying which has the simile for its basis, and is easily remembered. By means of this device, it made observations on all matters of life, primarily on the life of the individual. Biblical wisdom literature is permeated by a broad humanitarian spirit, giving advice on matters pertaining to all kinds of life, and is thus of an almost international character. Typical of this literature are the Proverbs of Solomon.

Similar in manner and tone to the Biblical wisdom books are the two Apocryphal books, Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon. The first one represents the more practical and moral side of wisdom, while the second, the religious—theologic and philosophic one.

In Ecclesiasticus, or The Sayings of Joshua, the son of Sirach, wisdom, of course, becomes identified with the Law, the Torah; the highest, most perfect wisdom rests in God, and man's wisdom consists in trusting and obeying Him. Yet, while this is the substratum of the book, the content is varied and broadly humanitarian. The proverbs of Solomon are taken as the model, but in view of the fact that the age of Sirach represented a richer and fuller life, more advanced in culture, the book reflects many more phases of life, and the picture drawn in it is many-colored. We will now turn to the author and book. The name of the author is given by all translators, Greek, Syriac, etc., as Joshua, the son of Sirach, although it is stated in many manuscripts that he was the son of Eliezer who was the son of Sirach. But he has gone down to tradition by the name of Sirach or ben Sira in Hebrew.

The age of the author and the date of the composition of the book can be determined, unlike other Apocryphal books, with definiteness. His grandson, who translated the book into Greek, states in his prologue to the translation that he completed it in the year 132 B. C. E. We can, therefore, suppose with certainty that his grandfather lived about the beginning of that century, and that the book was composed between the years 190–175 B. C. E. Joshua, ben Sira was a scholar (sopher) and as evidenced from the book kept a kind of college at his house of study where people came to drink of his wisdom. He was at the same time a man of the world and traveled much in his youth. In his age, the Jews came in contact with Greek culture, and many of them saturated with that culture began to become Hellenized and follow a life of pleasure with all its attendant consequences—laxity of morals, and loosening of family bonds, as well as neglect of social responsibility.—Against all these evils, the book was intended. It pretends to give a program in life which is intended as an antidote against Hellenism.

The outline of the book can be roughly given as follows:

CH.

I, 20, Prologue on wisdom and religion.

I, 20–IV, 11, on the conduct of the individual with relation to parents and society, and against pride.

IV, 11–VII, On steadfastness of character and praise of wisdom.

VII–IX, On friends, family, and relation to tyrants.

X–XI, On wisdom and government.

XII–XV, Again on friendship false and true, and choice of action.

XVI–XVIII, On God and His Providence.

XIX–XX, On carefulness in speech.

XXI–XXIII, On the evils of foolishness and anger.

XXIV, Again on wisdom.

XXV–XXVI, On women.

XXVII–XXIX, On greediness, right conduct in business and quarrelsomeness.

XXX–XXXI, On education, poverty and riches.

XXXII, On feasts and song.

XXXIII, On the righteous.

XXXIV–XXXV, On duties to God.

XXXVI–XXXVII, On prayer, friends, and counselors.

XXXVIII–XLII, On life and death, and the value and uses of physicians.

XLIII–L, A didactic sketch of early Jewish history.

L, A eulogy of the High Priest, Simon, the son of Anias, named the just.

LI, which is the final chapter, closes the book with a beautiful prayer.

The sayings of ben Sira were written in Hebrew, but the original was lost and the book came down to us in Greek. The Hebrew, however, was preserved for many centuries longer than the original of other books. Recently, a large portion of the Hebrew original was restored to us through the efforts of the late Dr. Solomon Schechter who discovered these fragments in the Genizah at Cairo, Egypt, in the year 1897.

The wisdom of ben Sira forms an exception to the other Apocryphal books, inasmuch as it exerted a great influence on later Jewish literature. In spite of the fact that the later Babylonian scholar, Rab Joseph, included it among the other Apocryphal books, the reading of which was prohibited by the great Rabbi Akiba,[5] the book was assiduously studied by the Talmudic scholars. The leading Tannaim and Amoraim quote his sayings. There are more than twenty proverbs of ben Sira cited in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, as well as other Midrashic collections under his name, and double that number are given anonymously. Some of the quotations are even introduced by the formula usually applied to quotations from the Bible, namely, "It is written." In two places, ben Sira is actually called Ketubim, the name given to the Hagiographa, the third division of the canon.

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[5] Tal B. Sanhedrin 99b.

All this shows that the words of Rab Joseph were never taken seriously, and that Ecclesiasticus both in its Hebrew and Aramaic versions was held in great esteem by the Talmudic authorities and Agadists. In Post Talmudic literature, the sayings of ben Sira are quoted frequently. We may add that in numerous quotations, the book is called Mishle ben Sira (the Parables or Proverbs of ben Sira) which was undoubtedly its original Hebrew name.

18. THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

This book, which in common with other books of this literature belongs to the pseudo-epigraphic class, namely, those that bear the name of an ancient authority as its author, resembles very closely the nature and character of its predecessor, the Wisdom of Joshua, son of Sirach. But, being of a later age, and the product of a soil more saturated with Hellenic culture, it displays a greater influence of that culture. The fact that the author was extensively acquainted with Greek philosophy is borne out almost in every chapter. It represents the first attempted blending of Greek philosophy with the Jewish spirit, yet the blending is far from complete; it is still mainly a product of Jewish wisdom.

The author of The Wisdom of Solomon, like ben Sira, glorifies wisdom, and like him, and even in a greater degree, he considers wisdom the daughter of God, nay, even His very reflection and glory. The book, however, possesses a different tone from the wisdom of ben Sira, for while the author of the former devotes himself primarily to describing the conduct of the wise men in different circumstances of life, the author of The Wisdom of Solomon is primarily interested in warning people against the folly of ungodliness, especially that of idolatry. The book contains also special discourses on the righteous and the wicked which are intended to inculcate the theory of reward and punishment after death, thus answering the vexing question why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Yet, ungodliness seems to be its main theme. On account of his peculiar treatment of the themes in the book, the author does not adhere strictly to the prescribed form of proverb and pithy sayings, but passes often into that of connected discourse.

The book falls into three parts: (*1*) Chs. I–IV deals with eschatology, namely, the doctrine of the last things, and as stated, is devoted to inculcating the beliefs in immortality and reward and punishment. The second part, VI–X, is devoted to the glorification of wisdom. In this part, Solomon is supposed to address himself to the potentates of the world, telling them of the beauties and the glories of wisdom. Wisdom becomes here almost an independent personality by the side of God. It is, "A breath of God's power, a brightness of the everlasting light" (VII, 25, 26). It is almost intrinsically united with God, initiated into His knowledge and a chooser of His works. It is thus represented not only as the special instrument of God in ordering things in the world but as His assistant, though originating from His very nature (Ch. VIII, 1; IX, 2). The third part, X–XIX, is a philosophic moral Midrash, i. e. interpretation of the history of Israel with relation to the rule of wisdom, showing how wisdom and providence of God have guided the destinies of the Jews as well as other nations. And from these events, the author draws conclusions as to the blessings of godliness and the curse of ungodliness. A long discourse on the folly of idolatry is inserted here (XIII–XV). This discourse possesses special interest on account of its theory on the origin of idolatry which reminds us of the Spencerian account of the origin of religion (XIV, 4–24). In this book, we find also an attempt to personify the almighty word of God, an attempt which later bore fruit in the Logos theory of Philo as well as in the Christian Apocalypse (IX, 1; XVI, 12; XVIII, 15).

The influence of Greek philosophy is evidenced not only in the application of the above epithets to wisdom, but in the enumeration of the four cardinal virtues, temperance, prudence, justice, and fortitude, advocated by the Stoics (VIII, 7). The psychology taught by the author seems to be Platonic, inasmuch as we are told that the soul of man is preexistent, and that if it is a good one, it enters an undefiled body. The body is considered by him as only a tabernacle for the soul.

The date can be fixed to be between the years 125–100 B. C. E., and Greek was the original language, as it was undoubtedly written by an Alexandrian Jew. Many prominent scholars claim double authorship for our book, assigning part III to a different writer. But this question is still a mooted one, and this theory cannot be said to possess absolute certainty.

19. IV MACCABEES

To the class of philosophic and didactic Apocryphal books belongs also the book called IV Maccabees. In its form, it is really a discourse, as the author himself states in his opening sentence that he is going to demonstrate that pious reason is the absolute ruler over motives and passions. He continues to tell us that by obeying reason, man can not only control his passions but also his emotions if they happen to be contrary to justice. He endeavors to prove his thesis by citing facts from Jewish history, especially the martyrdom of Eliezer and that of the seven brethren, the very same stories related in the second book of the Maccabees. Naturally, a large portion of the contents of the book is devoted to the description of the martyrdom of these heroes.

It is quite evident that the author is greatly influenced by stoicism, as it is the Stoic morality, the rule of reason over impulse, which he teaches. But he also deviates from Stoic teaching, in as much as it is not merely reason which holds sway over passion, but pious reason, namely, that reason which guides man to the obedience of the Divine Law. The author is very close to Pharisaism, and extols the virtues of the seven martyred brothers in their adherence to ceremonial law. He also emphasizes the theory of resurrection, but his view is somewhat different from the current one, namely, that it amounts to eternal and blessed life in Heaven. In this book, we likewise find the doctrine that the martyrdom of the righteous serves as an atonement for the sins of the generation, which was later adopted also in the Talmud.

IV Maccabees was most likely written in the beginning of the first century of the common era about the year 10 C. E. and in Greek.

Apocalyptic Literature

20. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

We now come to the class of books which are usually called Apocalyptic-Pseudo-Epigraphic. The first title, as stated above, explains the chief characteristic of their form, namely, as that of revelation, for, as we know already, Apocalypse is only another term for revelation. The author in these books is not supposed to speak his own mind, but only what is revealed to him either by direct vision, i. e. by communion with the spirit of God, or through the medium of an angel or through both. The second title is given to them on account of the fact that the revelation was not made to the real author but to an assumed one, to one of the ancient heroes or saints of Israel. This assumed authorship was used for the purpose of giving to the utterings more authority, and hence the title Pseudo-Epigraphic.

Their contents deal mainly with the Eschatology—the doctrine of last things which includes the problems discussed above (Section 3), namely, the immortality of the soul of the individual after death, the Messiah, the day of judgment and the new world which will come after the destruction of this world. But the dominant note in Apocalyptic literature is the problem of suffering in its double aspect, the individual and the national. It can, however, be said that this literature is or was originally at least, not as much interested in the problem of the individual Job as in that of the national Job. In other words, it deals primarily with the Job of the nations, the people of Israel. While the problem of the individual Job was more or less definitely settled by the doctrine of immortality and reward and punishment after death which was, by the second century B. C. E., almost generally accepted by the majority of the people and tacitly assumed by the Apocryphal books, the national Job problem, due to the condition of the times, assumed with every passing year a graver aspect. In time, people began to question why does this righteous nation, God's chosen one, suffer, while impious and wicked nations prosper? How long will this state continue? Of course, there was an old solution to this problem, the Messiah of the prophets. But that Messiah has delayed his coming and something had to be done to strengthen the belief in his coming and supply it with a lasting hold upon the minds of the people. A plain ordinary Messiah, i. e. merely a king or a ruler, who rules his people or even a large part of the world with justice and bestows prosperity upon the nations, would not do. This Messiah ought to be a superhuman being, all powerful, whose coming should be heralded by an entirely new era. This world with its iniquity and impiety can not be redeemed, it must be done away with altogether and a new one must come in its place. Thus, the whole idea was embellished and a new glamour was given to it. In addition, the craving for revenge, for justice done to the wicked and impious nations, enhanced the idea of a day of judgment, and some other features.

But the seed imbedded in the tendency to exalt the Messiah bore exotic fruit. The investment of the Messiah with a supernatural character and the emphasizing of the new era and the day of judgment set in motion a mystic current, which affected both the destiny of the martyred nation and the suffering righteous. The good times promised by the Messianic prophecies for Israel as a whole were gradually replaced by promises for the righteous only, and the righteous par excellence, became the salt of the earth. This led to an identification and coalescence of the righteous man with the righteous nation. The righteous nation will consist of righteous men only, and the new world era of the righteous nation together with the resurrection will be only for the select, (i. e. Zadikim) the righteous.

Once this current of mysticism and spiritualization set in, there was no way to stem it or control it from deviation. In time, the process of spiritualization was carried to the extreme, material elements in the Messianic era were dropped altogether, and complete life in eternity and spiritual bliss took their place. From this conception, to dropping nationality altogether and placing the righteous individual on the throne in the kingdom of God is but a succession of steps, and thus we have the curious phenomenon where a movement arising as a solution to a national problem ends by doing away with nationalism altogether.

We have outlined as briefly as possible in a general survey the contents of this literature, we will now examine its most important representative books, a list of which is hereby given.

21. THE JEWISH APOCALYPTIC BOOKS

1) Book of Enoch
2) The Book of Jubilees
3) Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
4) Psalms of Solomon
5) Apocalypse of Baruch
6) Assumption of Moses
7) 2 or 4 Ezra
8) Book of Adam and Eve
9) Slavonic Enoch
10) Sibylline Oracles

22. THE BOOK OF ENOCH

This book is not only the oldest of the Apocalyptic works but probably the most important one. It is not a homogeneous work but a collection of books all bearing the name Enoch as their author, though, in reality, emanating from the hands of different authors. The choice of Enoch as the supposed author of these heterogeneous writings is to be explained by the fact that the interpretation of the words in Genesis V, 24, "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him," to mean that Enoch was translated to Heaven during his lifetime, was current among the Jews in very early times. This situation fitted Enoch to be the proper author of books where Apocalypses and prophecies regarding the last judgment as well as an interpretation of the whole history past and future are stated and discussed. He, who was a righteous man and later became an angel, is the right person to whom all secrets are to be entrusted. And accordingly, all these things are found in the Enoch books.

What goes now under the name of the Book of Enoch is divided into the following sections or books: (*1*) Chs. I–XXXVI; (2) Chs. XXXVII–LXXI; (*3*) Chs. LXXII–LXXXII; (*4*) Chs. LXXXIII–XC; (5) Chs. XC–CIV; Chs. CV–CIX is an appendix containing extracts from an older book of Noah.

Book I opens up with a description of the impending day of judgment, and how the earth shall tremble when God will appear to judge it. It then calls upon sinners to watch the order of nature how regularly it is carried on, and reproaches them for not having observed the proper course of action. Doom is therefore promised to the wicked, but long life, gladness, and continuous peace to the righteous. These utterings are contained in the first seven chapters which seem to be an introduction to the whole book, for the day of judgment is one of the central ideas of this collection of writings. We meet with it again and again in every section of the book, no matter how different the contents may be otherwise.

In what follows, the history of sin in the world is related. It originated according to this book in the fall of the angels. The story runs that the angels under the leadership of Semhazai, according to one source, or Azael according to another, or under both of them, saw the daughters of men and lusted after them, and decided to descend to the earth and enjoy their company. They accordingly did so, and giant children were born unto them. These giants committed much sin, the angels, having been disgraced by their action, stayed on earth and taught the men the art of metal making and sword manufacturing, and the women the art of making cosmetics and their sinful use. Thus, sin and bloodshed multiplied in the world. God then decides to bring the flood to cleanse the earth from sin and sends the angel, Raphael, to bind the leaders of the fallen *watchers* (another name for the fallen angels) and chain them to rocks to await the day of judgment (Ch. VII–XII). In the following chapters, Enoch comes to the front; he is translated into Heaven and sees two visions. In the first, he tells how the *watchers* ask him to intercede on their behalf before God. He accedes to their request and presents their petition for reinstatement, but it is rejected and their doom announced. In the second vision, Enoch is conducted through the universe, he sees everything, the pillars of the earth, the abode of the winds, visits Sheol, sees spirits of men both of the righteous who wait for reward and the wicked who wait for judgment. He even sees Paradise as well as the accursed valley destined for the punishment of the wicked. He finally sees the abode of the stars, the portals whence they issue to run their course as well as that of rain and dew. And thus the book ends. The story of the fall of the angels is based upon a very early interpretation of Genesis VI, 2–4, where it is briefly told how the Bene Elohim—literally sons of God—saw the comely daughters of men, and they chose wives for themselves of which union giants and mighty men were born—which interpretation took the words Bene Elohim to mean angels—[6] and hence the story of their fall.

The second section of the book (Chs. XXVII–LXXI) is called the Book of Parables, as it consists of three parables or visions. They deal practically with the same problem, namely, why there is so much sin in the world, and why do the wicked prosper and how long will that state last. The answer runs on lines similar to that of the first book. Sin is traced again to the rebellious angels who led men astray, but were punished and are still awaiting greater punishment on the day of judgment. Sin continued to flourish in the world, but God or as the Book calls Him, the Lord of Spirits, or the Head of Days—a name already mentioned in Daniel—will appear and with Him the son of man, i. e. the Messiah, who preexists in the world from eternity, and to him God will commit all the sinners for judgment. *The Son of Man* will judge all beings, from angels to men; he will slay the sinners with the word of his mouth, and will banish wickedness from the face of the earth forever. The righteous and the elect of the past ages will be resurrected and together with the living righteous will enjoy both material prosperity and spiritual bliss forever.

The third section (Chs. LXXII–LXXXII) is primarily an astronomical treatise on the course of the sun, moon, and the stars. The secret of the movements of the luminaries are revealed to Enoch, who sees with his own eyes their very course, even the portals through which they enter and issue forth, for the purpose that he may transmit this knowledge to future generations. The calendar spoken of in this book is rather a peculiar one. The author knows the difference between the lunar year of 354 days and the solar year, yet he fixes the length of the year to be 364 days instead of 365¼. As for straightening out the difference of ten days between the lunar and solar years, he seems to add each year ten days, instead of the adopted Jewish method of adding a whole month at certain intervals.

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[6] The adopted Jewish tradition, however, interpreted the words Bene Elohim to mean simply sons of great men, or sons of the mighty. Thus, the Aramaic translation known as Onkelos, which is the standard authorized Jewish translation as it was approved of by great scholars at Jabne (90 C. E. See Ch. IV), rendered these words: The sons of the great (Bene Rabrebaia).

The fourth section (Chs. LXXXIII–XC) runs along lines laid down in the first two books dealing with the problem of sin and suffering of Israel, except that he deals with them in a more concrete fashion, inasmuch as the entire history up to the time of the writer is recounted in an Apocalyptic manner. The section is divided into two visions. In the first one, Enoch recounts to his son, Methuselah, what he saw regarding the impending deluge. In the second one, the history of the world is told in a series of dramatic conflicts, but these conflicts take place among animals instead of among men. The participants are bulls, rams, and sheep as well as lions and tigers, the sheep, of course, represent Israel. The history of the sheep is told in detail, their suffering is due partly to their own sin, but primarily to the sin of seventy shepherds who were appointed to guard them. It is rather an obscure symbol, and we do not know who these seventy shepherds are, but most likely they are angels. At any rate, these shepherds proved faithless, and the flocks suffered. But the day of delivery is near and there is a family in Israel from whom a deliverer will come, the sheep turn against their assailants, and a long sword is given to them. Then the future is depicted in the usual glowing colors, God will appear, the shepherds will be judged, a new Jerusalem will be set up by God Himself, and the righteous will be raised up; the Messiah will finally appear, and the age of bliss will begin.

The last section (Chs. XCI–CIV) takes no account of the origin of sin and seems to be devoted primarily to the problem of the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the oppressing sinners. The sinners here are represented as a party in Israel who falsify the sacred writings and deny God's Providence over men. They oppress, of course, the party of the righteous, but their deeds are recorded and their punishment will come right after death in hell. Then, follows a description of the Messianic kingdom, which differs considerably from the previous conception. The Messianic age is only preliminary to the final judgment. This age will last for a period of time, designated by the author as two world weeks, for he divides the whole time of the world into ten weeks. At the end of this time, the final judgment will take place, and then will follow the creation of a new earth and the resurrection of the righteous. The resurrected will live as spirits and angels, and not a material life.

The dates of the various sections are approximately as follows: the first section is the oldest, and was written before the Maccabean period about 170 B.C.E., this was succeeded by the fourth about 165–161 and followed by the third about 110. The second and the fifth sections were written most probably between the years 95–64 B.C.E. The original language of the books was Hebrew, and only a small portion was written in Aramaic. The Greek translation was lost, and it was only preserved in an Ethiopic version which is a translation of the Greek. The central ideas of the books of Enoch are the day of judgment, the conceptions of the Messianic age, and of the end of days. As regards the latter, there are different currents noticeable. In the first section, there is a redemption but no personal Messiah. In the second and fourth sections, a Messiah appears, but in the former he is endowed with a supernatural character, while in the latter he is more human. Likewise, there are differences in the conception of the Messianic kingdom or the kingdom of God. According to the first section, it will be established on earth with Jerusalem as a center, while according to the last, the Messianic kingdom is only preliminary to the eternal spiritual kingdom which will last forever. We see here already the beginning of the conflict between these two conceptions as to the future, the one, more nationalistic, the other, the more spiritual and universal one. We will meet again and again these two conflicting views in other Apocalyptic books, and traces of this conflict are also found in the Jewish Agadic literature.

23. THE BOOK OF JUBILEES

The Book of Jubilees which also goes under the name of "Little Genesis" is a very interesting book. Its first name is given to it because the author uses as the chronology, for the period it covers, the system of jubilees. Each jubilee consists of forty-nine years which is again divided into seven year weeks, each year representing a day in that week. The second name is applied to it on account of the fact that it is primarily a supplement to the Biblical book of Genesis, as well as to a part of Exodus.

Its contents are supposed to have been dictated by an angel of the Presence (the highest order of angels, namely, those who are always in the presence of God) to Moses, after he was called up on Mount Sinai, and given a brief survey of the destinies of Israel in the future. The book is intended to be the secret version of the history of Israel up to the time of the giving of the Law, which supplements the revealed history related in Genesis and part of Exodus, and it was supposed to be handed down from father to son until the time of its publication.

The Book of Jubilees consists of two elements, the homiletic narrative and Apocalyptic, but the first element predominates. It constitutes the first attempt at systematizing the various Agadic legends and stories which began to crystallize in early times around the personages of the Patriarchs, heroes, and events related in the Bible. For this purpose, all the events from creation to the giving of the Law are told as they are found in the Bible with slight omissions, but with a lot of detail and embellishments and additional stories explaining away certain apparent contradictions and inconsistencies. Thus, we are supplied with a detailed list of the other children of Adam, the names of the wives of Cain and Seth, also that of the wives of the sons of Jacob as well as other proper names of Biblical personages not mentioned in the Bible. We also find there detailed accounts of the building of the Tower of Babel and its destruction, of the lives of Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, descriptions of the wars between the children of Jacob and the children of Esau, as well as between them and the kings of the Amorites. The love of the author for detail may be seen in the fact that he gives the exact date of each event, such as the day of the month on which each of the sons of Jacob was born and many other dates.

But besides these embellishments, the author has another and a higher purpose in mind, and that is the glorification of the Law. Whether he meant to fend off the attacks made by the Hellenists against the Law, or for some other reason, he teaches everlasting validity of the Law and its having been observed from eternity. The Law, according to him, was observed in its most important parts at all times in Heaven. Thus, the two high orders of angels were created circumcised, likewise, the Sabbath was observed in Heaven by God and the same orders of angels long before its observation was ordained to the Jews. Similarly, many other laws which were given to the Jews by Moses were observed previously by Adam, Enoch, Noah, and the Patriarchs, such as the law regarding purification after childbirth was instituted immediately after the creation of Adam and Eve, the law of Jubilees was enacted by Enoch. Again, Noah was commanded to institute The Feast of Weeks (Shabuoth) as well as that of the New Moon (Rosh Chodosh); Abraham observed the Feast of Tabernacles (Sucoth) and the giving of tithes; penalties for incestuous relations were enacted yet in the time of Jacob and Judah as well as that for intermarriage with heathens. Levi was called to the priesthood by Jacob, and in this manner many more laws are traced to early times. In the description of these laws, there is observed the spirit of a rigorous Halakah, though we find there a good number of deviations from the Halakah embodied in the Mishnah.

The Apocalyptic element is quite considerable, angels and demons predominate and abound in the world. The story of the fall of the angels and their teaching of sin to the children of man is referred to. The future is pictured in a manner which we meet quite frequently in other Apocalyptic books. The Messiah will come to Judah, but no supernatural characteristics are attributed to him. The Messianic era will be realized on earth and at that time, there will be a physical and ethical transformation; pain and sin will disappear and man will live until one thousand years, in happiness, and after death pass to immortality.

The date of the Book can be almost definitely determined to be between the years 135–105 B. C. E. in the heyday of the Maccabean dynasty, namely, the reign of John Hyrcanus, as reference to the high priest being civil ruler is made, and a time of peace and prosperity is implied, and no reference to party strife between the Sadducees and Pharisees is mentioned. The original language was undoubtedly Hebrew, but the Hebrew version was lost, and even the Greek translation of it likewise disappeared, and like the Book of Enoch, it was preserved in the Ethiopic. Jubilees exerted great influence on later Jewish literature. Many of its stories are incorporated in later Agadic collections, and its remarks are otherwise quoted in a number of small Midrashim. According to one source [7] a Hebrew copy under the name of Sepher Hajobloth (Book of Jubilees) was still extant in the time of Saadia (tenth century).

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[7] Commentary to Chronicles, Ch. XXIII, 3, by one of the pupils of Saadia quoted by A. Epstein in his introduction to Midrash Tadshe, p. 7.

24. *THE TESTAMENTS OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS*

The value of this book, or rather the collection of little books consists not as much in its Apocalyptic character as in its ethical nature, for it contains primarily exhortations and encouragements to follow in the way of righteousness and warnings to abstain from sin. Its name, as mentioned, is the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. These twelve Patriarchs are the twelve children of Jacob who are represented as speaking to their children before death and giving them moral testaments and ethical injunctions. In this work, there are many Christian interpolations as there are references to an incarnated Messiah, but the work is undoubtedly genuinely Jewish and was written in Hebrew. As said, it is a collection of twelve little books, one for each of the Patriarchs, yet they evidently come from one hand, as there is quite a uniformity in their makeup.

In each of these testaments, three different elements may be distinguished. The first one is the rehearsal by the Patriarch of the history of his own life, in which, on the one hand, he charges himself with the sin committed, and on the other hand, glorifies his virtues. These stories are very interesting in themselves, as they represent the early Agada, the folk embellishments of the lives of the Biblical heroes. We find there, therefore, a large number of details concerning the lives of the twelve children of Jacob. The second element is the moral which the Patriarch draws from his life. In case of sin, he exhorts his descendants to beware of that sin which was the cause of deep distress to him. In case of virtue, he recommends them to follow and to imitate his virtuous life.

The third element is the Apocalyptic. At the end of each of these testaments, there are found certain predictions regarding the future of that particular tribe, as each Testament is addressed to one tribe by its Patriarch, e. g. Reuben or Simon, etc. In these predictions very often their future punishments for apostasies is foretold, and their exile is described, and the destruction of the Temple is mentioned. They are also warned not to sever their connections with the tribes of Levi and Judah, one representing the priesthood and the other the regal power. Finally, the predictions contain numerous references to a Messiah.

These last predictions have an interesting feature. It seems that the Messiah is not to come from Judah, as all Messianic utterances have always predicted, but from Levi. However, there are also in the same book reversions to the Messiah from Judah. These contradicting statements are to be explained by the fact that the greatest part of the book was written during the time of John Hyrcanus, the illustrious Maccabean prince when he was still a Pharisee. The author looked upon him as the chosen Messiah and promised him a glorious future. Hence, the Messiah from Levi, for John was a priest. But soon John broke with the Pharisees, and his descendants were far from being the ideal pious Jews. The Maccabean high priests could not have become the desired Messiah, and therefore, the later additions to the Testaments reverted to the traditional Messiah from Judah. The date of the book is accordingly clearly determined. The original was written during the years 109–106 B.C.E., while the additions were written 75–50 B.C.E.

The ethical teachings of the book are of great importance. They exhibit noble sentiments on social relations, and it is quite evident that some of the plumes with which the New Testament adorns itself are borrowed from here. Testament of Gad, Ch. VI, 3–7 reads as follows: "Love ye one another from the heart, and if a man sin against thee, cast forth the poison of hate and speak peacefully to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he confess and repent forgive him. But if he deny it, do not get into a passion with him, lest catching the poison from thee, he take to swearing and so thou sin doubly. And though he deny it, and yet have a sense of shame when reproved give over reproving him. For he who denieth may repent, so as not again to wrong thee; yea, he may also honor and be at peace with thee. But if he be shameless and persist in his wrong doing, even so forgive him from the heart and leave to God the avenging." On comparing the passages in Matthew, Ch. VI, 12–15 or Ch. VIII, 15, 35, and other places, we can almost notice direct borrowing. Here forgiveness becomes synonymous with banishing personal resentment when wrong is done to one. The injunction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," which was supposed by some to be a Christian improvement upon Leviticus Ch. XIX, 18, inasmuch as it is said there, "Thy friend," is also found in the Testament Isachar Ch. V, 2 and VII, 6 in this wording. There is also no condemnation of the gentile; their righteous will share in the glory of the Messiah. (Testament of Benjamin Ch. V, 2–5.)

The ideas on resurrection also display some peculiarities. There is to be a gradual resurrection, first of the Old Testament heroes, and then of the righteous, and finally also of the wicked. There is no new world spoken of, the earth will be the scene of the Messianic age, but the kingdom of the Messiah will last forever.

25. *THE PSALMS OF SOLOMON*

This collection of eighteen Psalms possesses great interest for everyone who wants to penetrate into the soul of the pious Jew in the times of great religious fermentations, namely, the first half of the first century before the common era, and fathom its depths. Somebody has named these Psalms, the Psalms of a Pharisee. We find in them not only a soul-stirring yearning for God, but also a high moral tone, glorification of the Law, and insistence on its scrupulous observance. The Psalms denounce the last Maccabean princes, who "despise the Law" by allying themselves with the Sadducees. They tell of their punishment by God in bringing a strange man from a strange land who was not of the race of Israel, and that he struck a mighty blow at them. That this refers to Pompey, there is no doubt, for we are told that the dragon which had conquered Jerusalem was itself put to death by the seashore in Egypt (II Ps.).

It is no wonder then that there is an urgent desire for a Messiah and the belief is expressed that this Messiah will come from the House of David. There is also reference to the resurrection of the righteous, but they rise not in order to enjoy the material blessings of the Messianic kingdom only for eternal life in the spirit.

The original language was undoubtedly Hebrew, but like the others it was lost, and it is contained now only in Greek. The date of its composition as indicated by references to the events of the times can be quite definitely determined. The Psalms were written between the years 63–40 B. C. E.

26. *THE APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH*

This Apocalypse is a beautiful and noble reflection of the feeling of the faithful Jews at the time of the destruction of the Temple and immediately after it, and of what they thought of this catastrophe and how they looked towards the future. It is ascribed to Baruch, son of Nereiah, disciple of Jeremiah, and is divided into seven sections (*1*) Chs. I–XII; (*2*) Chs. XII–XX; (*3*) XX–XXXIV; (*4*) XXXV–XLVI; (*5*) XLVII–LII; (*6*) LIII–LXXVI; (*7*) LXXVI–LXXXVIII.

In section I, Baruch describes the destruction of Jerusalem by the

Chaldeans—it refers, of course, to the first Temple, since Baruch writes it. He tells us, however, that the Chaldeans did not really conquer the city nor burn the Temple. This work was done by four angels, who took good care to bury the most holy vessels so that they should not be profaned by the enemy. Only after the angels deserted the city, the enemy entered and fire broke out in the Temple. The exiles are carried away and—contrary to Jeremiah XL, 2–4, according to which Jeremiah returned from the way back to Palestine,—Jeremiah goes with them to Babylon while Baruch stays in Jerusalem to comfort the people.

In the second section, Baruch has a vision, wherein he is commanded to fast seven days, and then appear before God. After he has done so, he pours forth his complaint at the evil that has befallen his people, and asks the pertinent question: "Why do men depart while the world which was supposed to have been created for their sake stands?" He is informed of the judgment which will overtake the gentiles too, and of the world to come which is to come for the sake of the righteous. He is then bidden to prepare for another vision.

The third section contains the vision of Messianic times. Baruch, after being reprimanded for his doubts, is told in detail of the signs of the coming judgment and the tribulations that people will then undergo, and after that, the Messiah will appear and times of joy and glory will follow. The author is quite punctilious in telling of the incidents of that time. The magnitude of the Behemoth, the great ox, and the Leviathan prepared for the righteous are minutely described. Then follows an account of the remarkable productivity of the land in those times, each vine will have one thousand branches, each branch one thousand clusters, and each cluster one thousand grapes. After this, he calls the elders of the people together, tells them about the redemption, and admonishes them about the strict observance of the Law.

The fourth section relates of a dream by Baruch wherein a forest of mighty trees is seen, and opposite it a single vine. A spring issues forth from the vine, which grows into a flood, and gradually sweeps away the trees of the forest, only one cedar remains standing. Finally, that cedar is burned up, while the vine breaks forth into bloom. The interpretation of the dream is given, namely, the forest which is Rome will be swept away, only one part of it will remain, but even that will be destroyed by the vine which is Messiah. Baruch then prepares for another revelation.

The fifth section is that promised revelation, but adds little to the foregoing, it only gives more details about Messianic times and resurrection.

The sixth section is a complete thing in itself. It gives in an Apocalyptic and symbolic form the history of the world as well as a description of the future time. Baruch sees a huge cloud which discharges at intervals black and clear waters, and so on, the black water predominating, then a light breaks forth which heals the earth and twelve streams arise which subject themselves to the light. An interpretation is offered. The cloud is the present world, the successive black waters are the sinful generations, the clear waters are the generations of the righteous, such as that of the Patriarchs, David, and other righteous kings, the last dark water represents the time of tribulation before the Messiah appears, and the light the Messiah, while the twelve streams are symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel. At the close of the interpretation, Baruch is informed that his end is near.

The seventh section tells how Baruch addresses the people, and at their request, two epistles are written, one to the nine and one half tribes driven away by Shalmaneser in 722 B. C. E., and one to the exiles in Babylon. In the epistle to the nine and one half tribes, they are told of the destruction of the Temple, and also of the promised redemption, and are urged to be steadfast to the observance of the Law. The other epistle is not given.

The date is evident, as stated above, and it must have been written between the years 70–90 C. E. The original language was Hebrew and was later translated into Greek, but both the Hebrew and Greek were lost and the book was preserved only in Syriac.

The Apocalypse of Baruch possesses a number of interesting points besides those mentioned above. In its Messianic conception, it seems to imply a double Messianic time, a temporary restoration of Zion which will be followed by a great war, and only then the real Messiah will appear and the permanent Messianic time will be initiated. This view was later incorporated in Talmudic literature, where it is asserted that a Messiah ben Joseph is supposed to gather the Jews first into Palestine, and then Gog and Magog (Ezekiel XXXVIII–XXXIX) will come and war upon Israel, and that Messiah will be killed, and after that, the Messiah of the House of David will appear. Likewise, there are many parallels to our author's description of Messianic times in the Talmud and Midrashim.

Very important are his utterances about the Law, which means the study of the Torah. Such sayings as, "There shall not be wanting to Israel a wise man, nor a son of the Law to the race of Jacob" (XL, 4), or

"Though man depart, yet the Law abideth" (LXXVII, 15), or "Zion has been taken away from us and we have nothing now save the Torah" (LXXIII, 3), are significant of the time and spirit of Raban Johanan ben Zakkai. The last saying was parodied in a poem used in the Neilah liturgy of the Day of Atonement.

27. *IV EZRA*

This book as it is found in the English Apocrypha consists of sixteen chapters, but we have to separate the first two and the last two, namely, Chs. I, II, XV, and XVI, as these two appendices are really independent works, and are sometimes called III and V Ezras respectively. They seem to come from a much later hand, and contain clearly Christian additions as it is evident from Ch. II, 34 to the end. IV Ezra proper is the portion Chs. III–XIV which is divided into three parts. One, III–X inclusive, named the Apocalypse of Salthiel; two, Chs. XI, XII, Vision of the Eagle, and Ch. XIII, Vision of the Son of Man. Three, Chs. XIV, called the Ezra Piece, an extract from an older Ezra Apocalypse. These parts are again subdivided into separate visions, and the whole book is a series of them.

Our book is a pure Hebrew composition, and reflects genuine Jewish thinking. Unfortunately, the text of the English Apocrypha is very corrupt, following the Latin version, it is full of Christian interpolations, such as we find in Ch. VII, 28–29 references to Jesus which are not found in any of the versions in the other languages. IV Ezra is preserved in four versions, Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, and Armenian. They all seem to be translations from a Greek text which is lost and which in turn was a translation of the Hebrew original.

It deals primarily with the problem of the national Job–Israel. In fact, it is a Job in miniature following along the lines of the Biblical book of Job in a number of respects. It runs, as mentioned, in a series of visions, the contents of which is as follows: Vision one, Chs. III–V, 20, relates how Ezra being in Babylon, in the thirtieth year after the destruction of the Temple, complains to God why his chosen one, Israel, is suffering, while the pagan nations prosper. The angel, Uriel, comes and reproves him for his complaints, and informs him that wickedness has an appointed time, and that most of the distress has already passed, and the end will be soon announced by definite signs. Ezra then fasts seven days, and prepares for a second revelation. In the second vision, Chs. V, 21–VI, 34, Ezra wails again over the bitter fate of Israel, and is rebuked and promised once more that the end of suffering is near, and the angel enumerates the signs of the approaching end more fully. The third vision, VI, 34–IX, 35, is the climax of the Slathiel Apocalypse. In it, Ezra propounds the problem in its final form. If the world was created for Israel's sake, why is Israel deprived of his inheritance? A debate between Ezra and the angel ensues, at the close of which the temporary Messianic kingdom and the end of the world are once more announced and described. The vision contains also discussions on the election of Israel, and on the saving of the righteous as well as other kindred matters. In the fourth vision, Chs. IX, 35–XI, Ezra sees a woman weeping, and on being asked for the cause of her tears, she tells him that it is because of the loss of a son. He chides her for that, and tells her to mourn for Jerusalem. The woman disappears, and her place is taken by a built city. The interpretation is then offered by the angel; the woman is Zion; the son, the Temple of Solomon; and the built city, the new Jerusalem.

The fifth vision, XI–XII, relates how Ezra sees the rise of an eagle from the sea, with twelve wings and three heads, and from these wings grew some more wings. The eagle flew and ruled over the land. The ruling, however, was done successively by each wing and head, and as soon as the wing or head had completed its time of ruling, it disappeared and the next wing or head stood up to rule. As the series of changes draws towards the end, a lion rushes forth from the woods, and roars at the eagle upon whose body are only left two heads, foretelling its doom. And as he spoke, the entire body of the eagle was consumed by fire. The interpretation of the vision is given: The eagle is the Roman Empire, the wings and heads the various kings and emperors, and the lion who foretold the doom of the eagle is the Messiah. The sixth vision, Ch. XIII, that of the Son of Man, contains a description of the coming of the Messiah. It tells how Ezra sees a man rising from the sea and at his sight, nations tremble and rush to attack him; he ascends a mountain, and from there he subdues them not by weapons, but by the breath of his mouth. Multitudes then surround him, rejoicing at his coming. The interpretation follows, the man is the Messiah, and the rejoicing multitudes are the returning ten tribes. The seventh vision, Ch. XIV, is the Ezra legend, where Ezra is told to prepare for his death, and before that to write the books of wisdom. Accordingly, then, he writes out ninety-four books, of which he is told to publish only twenty-four—

which may refer to the twenty-four books of the scriptures—and to hide the seventy which, of course, refer to the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic books. Ezra accomplishes, with the aid of assistants, the task assigned to him and thus completes his mission in this world. It is quite evident that this vision is intended as an apology for the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature, and endeavors to prove their sacred origin.

The author of the book was a Pharisee, careful of observances and of an ascetic nature. His beliefs are that God, and God alone is responsible for creation, and that Israel is His chosen people for whose sake the world was made.

The answers to the problem of the suffering of Israel are as follows: (*1*) God's ways are inscrutable, (*2*) human intelligence is finite and we can not therefore comprehend them, (*3*) evil must run its course, but God loves Israel and the future Messianic age will solve all difficulties. In general, we are to note in our author's conception of the future age and the end of days, a blending of two currents. The one is a more material view of the glorious days of the Messiah, when prosperity for Israel will come in full measure. The other is the more spiritual one, where eternal life and bliss are promised to the elect. He accordingly divides the future age into two periods, the Messianic which will last for four hundred years, during which all the righteous together with the Messiah will enjoy great prosperity, and at the end of which they all, including the Messiah, will die. Then after an interval of seven days of silence, the Day of Judgment will be ushered in followed by the resurrection and the creation of a new world (Ch. VII, 26–36). This seems to have been a compromise between two tendencies and an attempt to join the two current views of *Yemoth Hamoshiach* (days of Messiah) and *Olam Habo*. The date of four hundred for the Messianic period is unique in this literature, though it is found in Rabbinic literature.

If we add to this highly interesting content the beauty of its style, the pointed parables, and deep pathos with which it is permeated, IV Ezra becomes the most interesting book in this particular literature.

Its date can almost be determined with precision. Its constant references to the Romans, the destruction of the Temple, and the acquaintance of the author with the succession of the Roman Emperors all point to the close of the first century C. E., namely, the period between the years 81–96.

28. *THE MINOR APOCALYPTIC WORKS*

There are a number of other Apocalyptic books, some preserved wholly, and some partly. They are of minor importance, as they contribute but little to the trend of thought of Apocalyptic literature, and many of them were interpolated by later Christian hands, so that the Jewish element can be disentangled with difficulty. Of these, the most important are: (*1*) The Assumption of Moses, (2) The Book of Adam and Eve, (*3*) Several books of the Sybilline Oracles.

(*1*) The Assumption of Moses seems to be only a fragment of a much larger work, reference to which is found in many ancient writings. It is supposed to be the content of an address delivered by Moses to Joshua before his death. In it, the dying leader discloses to his pupil prophecies concerning the future of Israel, which he instructs him to write down and hide until the appointed time. The whole history of Israel up to the time of the real author is foretold. There are quite evident references to the destruction of the first Temple, the persecution of Antiochus, the reign of the Hasmoneans, the division into Pharisees and Sadducees, and the reign of Herod. It ends, of course, with a promise for a happy future, when God will arise to judge the world, and inaugurate the period of happiness for Israel. There is no description, though, of the Messiah. The date of the book is evident from the content which points to the first decade after the death of Herod, namely, about 6 C. E. The original language was either Hebrew or Aramaic.

(2) The book of Adam and Eve is a book of legends clustering around Adam and Eve and their descendants. It begins with telling how Adam and Eve mourn for the loss of the Paradise through their fall, and tells how desiring to do penance for their sins, they wade into the Jordan and stand there for days, up to the neck, in water. Satan comes to persuade Eve to leave the water, but she refuses to listen to his advice; he then tells her the story of his fall. The life of Adam and Eve is subsequently told with many embellishments. Finally, the death of Adam approaches, and at first, he attempts to evade his end by sending Seth and Eve to Paradise for the healing oil, but when they are refused entrance, he resigns himself to his fate. He assembles his family, and Eve tells them the story of their fall. Adam dies, and is borne away by angels who promise his resurrection. Six days later, Eve dies and is likewise borne away by angels.

(*3*) The collection of oracles bearing the name of the Sibylline

Oracles constitutes very interesting reading. The legend of the existence of a Sibyl, i. e. a woman prophetess, or rather several Sibyls, was current among many nations of antiquity, such as the Greeks, the Romans, and a number of peoples of Asia Minor. According to the story, prophecies of the Sibyl were said to have been brought to King Tarquinus Priscus (616–578 B. C. E.) in Rome and deposited in the Temple. Some Hellenized Jews of Alexandria have, therefore, utilized this current story for propaganda purposes, and wrote long poems in the name of the heathen Sibyl, wherein Judaism is glorified, and the fortunes and vicissitudes of the Jews foretold. In the collection of Sibylline Oracles preserved, there are twelve books, but only three, namely, the third, fourth, and fifth, emanated from Jewish writers, the rest belong to Christian writers of a later date.

In the third book, Biblical incidents, such as the building of the Tower of Babel, the establishment of the Solomonic kingdom, as well as other events of historical importance in the life of other nations are mentioned and enlarged upon, and in conclusion, a sketch of the history of the Jewish people up to the time of Cyrus is given, where the Jews are characterized as a God-fearing nation. There follows then a series of oracles, announcing judgment against Babylon, Egypt, Gog, Magog, Troy, and Lybia for their sins and addiction to idolatry. The book contains also a number of prophecies concerning Antiochus Epiphanes, Phrygia, Cyprus, and the Hellenes, as well as other prophecies foretelling judgment upon a sinful world, terminating in the coming of the Messiah. In all these prophecies, Israel is lauded as a people which cleaves to the Law of God, and the paganism of the other nations together with their unnatural crimes are severely decried, and exhortation to the heathen for conversion to Judaism is made.

The fourth book is a bitter diatribe against heathen wickedness, and a call upon the nations of Europe and Asia to repent. It tells them that unless they do so, God will destroy the world by fire, and mete out judgment to all sinners. The siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the second Temple are mentioned in that book. The fifth book contains a good deal of eschatology, a fine geographical description of Judea, as well as a chronicle of events in Jewish history up to the time of Hadrian.

The dates of these books can be definitely determined from their contents. Book three is the oldest and was written about 140 B. C. E., book four about 80 C. E. and book five about 130 C. E. These oracles were all written in Greek and constitute the boldest Jewish polemic against heathenism. They were written not only in fine Greek hexameters, but were purposely put in a heathen garb, namely, in the form of prophecies of heathen sybils, in order to give their utterances more credence.

Chapter II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HALAKAH

29. JUDAISM IN THE 4TH AND 3RD CENTURIES B.C.E.

The shaping of the form of Judaism, as we know it now to be, as it was lived and practiced for the last two thousand years as a religion which embraces all phases of Jewish life, not only the life of the group but of the individual as well, begins with the return of the Jews from exile, and especially with the reformation of Ezra: (Period of activity 458–444 B.C.E.). It is rather a curious fact, but true nevertheless, that it was the Babylonian exile that gave the greatest impetus to the development of Judaism, to its deepening and extension. Having been deprived of their country, their national sanctuary, and being prevented from offering sacrifices—which was until that time the strongest religious expression,—the Jews turned to religion as their only bulwark of defense which might keep up the preservation of their national entity. At the same time, on account of the absence of sacrifices, which is primarily a group function, prayer became the expression of religious feeling. And as prayer is individual by nature, religion as a whole thus became more individualized and intensified,—God came nearer to man. No more was His presence, even in the mind of the average Jew, associated with a definite place, but He was everywhere, and the Jew could communicate with Him at any time and at any place. The deeper inner expression demanded likewise a fuller external expression of religion which ultimately resulted in a craving for more ceremonies, more detailed and strict fulfillment of religious precepts and legal enactments.

With this tendency for a more individualized and more detailed religion, the Jews returned from exile. The first century passed in struggle, both spiritual and physical, but the clouds were finally dispersed, and life in all phases, political, social and spiritual, assumed a more settled form thanks to the labors of Ezra and Nehemiah, the latter operating in political social sphere, and the former in the spiritual one.

Ezra, known as the scribe (Hebrew, Sopher), a name which is practically synonymous with the name teacher, was the first of the great caste in Israel who follow in a long successive line through the ages under various names, but whose function was to teach and instruct in the ways of practical life. And the Jews at that time needed teachers more than preachers. With religion becoming individualized, the share of every Jew, the function of the preacher, and even the very greatest of this class, the Nabi—the Prophet, became inadequate, and hence prophecy was silenced. The Nabi left the scene and his place was taken by the scribe, the teacher.

Thus, a great movement of religious, spiritual, and literary revival which was the result of a happy combination of a popular demand, though it might have been inarticulate, and the existence of the proper leaders to meet that demand, had begun. The movement was not the work of one man, nor even of one generation, but continued to progress for at least two centuries. Unfortunately, the veil of secrecy is cast over this most fruitful period of spiritual activity, but when the veil of secrecy is finally lifted, and the light of history shines forth upon Jewish life in the second Commonwealth, about the close of the third century B.C.E., there is revealed to us a Judaism fully grown and firmly intrenched in the hearts of the people, one ramified in many ways, and bubbling with energy, one to which the succeeding generations have comparatively added but little.

This was a peculiar period of activity, inasmuch as its traces were not left in writing but in life itself, for with the exceptions of a few additions to the Old Testament, and the great work of organizing and closing the canon, which most probably took place in the period under discussion, there are no literary records which tell the story of the great spiritual fermentation of the time. And well did a great Jewish scholar characterize it by saying: "Religious institutions and not documents are the witnesses of development of Judaism and its activity during these two centuries, ideas and not books are the expression of the period." [1] And because of this peculiarity, the delineating of such a literature is certainly not a light task, but none the less an interesting one.

Later tradition ascribed almost the entire work of revival to Ezra, making him the central figure of this great work, and the great synagogue (Kenesseth Hagedolah), the assembly of sages, merely as his assistants, thus speaking of him as the founder of many religious institutions which are at times referred to the entire assembly. In reality, he was merely the initiator of the movement, and many were the successors and the workers in the field of spiritual progress. Ezra's great credit is, that he inaugurated a system of popular education on such a scale the like of which was never seen. The book of the Law of Moses (Torath Moshe) which was in previous times probably the share of the few became, through the activities of Ezra, the inheritance and property of every Jew. It was he who instituted public reading of the Torah on Sabbath, festivals, and all public occasions, and not a mere reading, but an intelligent and interpretative one (Nehemiah Ch. VIII, 1, 8; IX, 3; XIII, 1). These public readings and interpretations gave impetus to study which continued to call forth new activities and constant interpretations of the law which in turn necessitated further study. The craving for religious satisfaction brought about the establishment of synagogues in various places and these became not only centers of religious worship but centers of education, for the Law was read and expounded there, as well as in the general public gatherings.

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[1] G. Karpeles: Geschichte der Jüdischen Literatur, Vol. I, p. 139.

But the books of the Law of Moses were not the only books in the possession of the people, there were also historical works, prophecies, Psalms, collections of proverbs, all of which gave inspiration and inculcated teaching and hope in the hearts of the people. These again needed interpretation and expounding, and what is more, organization, ordering, and standardization into one complete body. Thus, the work of education and spiritual revival ramified and called constantly for new energy, for new zeal on the part of the men who were to direct this movement.

30. THE SOPHERIM (SCRIBES) AND THE GREAT ASSEMBLY

But who were these men who guided the stream of spiritual fermentation into the proper channels and really molded Judaism into that mighty force which withstood all onslaughts through the ages? They were the men of the Great Assembly or we should rather say Assemblies, and what is probably more correct, a certain portion of them. It is true that we possess no written documents telling us of the exact nature and character of this kind of Assembly—and certainly not the minutes of their transactions at their sessions, as nothing short of that would satisfy some scholars—but a persistent tradition of the existence and fruitful activity of such an Assembly is constantly reiterated in Talmudic literature and incorporated in the Mishnah (Aboth I, 1). There is, therefore, no reason whatever to doubt the existence and extensive activity of such an Assembly, some opinions of radical scholars notwithstanding, but with one modification, namely, that it was not an occasional assembly but a permanent institution, the activity of which lasted for two centuries. In other words, it was a successive series of Assemblies.

As we know that the Jews under Persian suzerainty possessed complete home rule which kept law and order, and as we know of no other organ of government that existed at the time, it stands to reason that this Great Assembly was that public and social organ which discharged the function of government. But as in Judaism, civil, religious, and political laws were never separated, it follows that the same body discharged several functions at once, and acted simultaneously as a judicial, executive, and legislative body.

It originated, according to some scholars,[2] in the body of signers of the agreement drawn up by Nehemiah and Ezra in the year 444 B. C. E. wherein a popular pledge to observe the Laws of Moses was made (Nehemiah X, 1–30). The number of signers was eighty-five, and a tradition in the Palestinian Talmud really fixes the number of the Great Assembly as eighty-five, though other traditions round the number out to one hundred twenty. With the death of Ezra and Nehemiah, this body was constituted into a permanent Assembly which by its several functions carried on the work of both leaders. But legislative work could not be carried on without study and expounding of the Law, and likewise the supervising of the great educational movement needed the proper persons for its accomplishment. Hence, the teachers and expounders formed not only an important part of the Great Assembly or Assemblies but have also formed a special department within it. They have, then, assumed the humble cognomen of the great spiritual leader, Ezra, namely, Sopher, scribe or teacher, and were called Sopherim, but later tradition calls them at times also the men of the Great Assembly, which in fact they were.

31. THE WORK OF THE SOPHERIM

It was these scholars or Sopherim who, as a step in popular education, changed the ancient Hebrew script for the Assyrian or the Syrian, the square script, which was henceforth used in transcribing the sacred Scriptures, and ultimately became the only script known to the Jews. This change was an important literary step, as the Jews after their return from exile were scarcely acquainted with the ancient script, and the adoption of the more familiar one facilitated the study of the Holy Law, and brought it within the grasp of every Jew. The next great literary task of the Sopherim, in the course of time, was the closing of the Canon of the Old Testament. We know very little of the process of this important event, all that later tradition tells us is that men of the Great Assembly had organized or edited certain collections of prophecies and other writings and finally closed the Canon. We must, however, imagine that the closing of the Canon did not take place at once but was rather a protracted process, the final step of which took place at the close of the period of the existence of the Great Assembly, namely, in the second half of the third century B. C. E. though it is not improbable that minor additions were inserted later.[3]

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[2] N. Krochmal, Guide of the Perplexed in Our Time (More Nebuke Hazeman), p. 42.

The Sopherim have also arranged and standardized the earliest forms of the liturgy which were rather few in number, but served as a basis for a much increased one in later ages. Thus, their activity extended to all phases of life. But as great as it was in all these directions, their real Magnum Opus consisted not in written documents but in their role as teachers and expounders of the Law of Moses, and in a lesser degree, also the other Scriptures. This activity it was which made Judaism what it is and laid the basis for the future great literary collections known as the Mishnah and the Talmud, and the various Agadic books. Our task lies, therefore, to see how it was carried on.

When the teacher began to teach and expound the laws, there was revealed the rift between the law as stated in the Pentateuch and life as it was lived, especially in its developed form.

The Law or the Laws as embodied in the Pentateuch are, on the whole, expressed in a general way, statements are inadequate, and many phases of life are omitted. Life is always ahead of the written Law, if it be taken in its literal meaning, and Jewish law and life form no exception. Undoubtedly, there were always supplementary traditions, customs, and usages which the people employed in their everyday life. As a matter of fact, Jewish tradition asserts, and with justice, that a supplementary Law was given to Moses on Sinai which he in turn handed over to his follower, Joshua, and he again to his successors, and so on through the generations. This body of Oral Law, besides direct Mosaic supplements, contained a good number of adopted customs, old usages, some ancient interpretations of the Written Law, and other things. But in general, the Oral Law was not spread among, nor observed by the *people at large* during the first Commonwealth; only a small minority observed it. A large part of it might have been forgotten during the exile. It had, therefore, to be revived, and new interpretations added, new precepts grafted upon the old so as to meet the exigencies of a developed and extended life.

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[3] This is rather a conservative opinion but the one which seems to be more probable. The question of the closing of the Canon is a very complex one, and the literature on the subject is quite extensive. It would be out of place in a history of literature to analyze all the opinions and views on this matter. We will only refer the reader to the following works: Zunz, Gottesdienstliche Vorträge p. 34; Weiss, Dor Dor We-Dorshov (History of Oral Law), Vol. I, p. 89, where the conservative view is ably defended.

32. METHOD OF THE SOPHERIM

The method of the Sopherim, the scribes, in expounding the Law was a strict analytic one. It took as its basis the view that the Torah is not to be taken as literature, where additional words or special constructions are used for rhetorical purposes, but in it each word or change in construction has a special meaning. Besides, by careful analysis, they elicited interpretations from the very words themselves which gave to their contents a fuller and detailed meaning. In addition, other devices were used such as comparison of passages, logical analogy, and similar means of synthetic exegesis, and thus the Law was expanded, and came to embrace all phases of life.

We must not, however, assume that all this work of exegesis and interpretation really added many new laws, for as stated, the greatest part of Oral Law was old, and undoubtedly was practiced in early times either as Mosaic supplements or older interpretations by the few who did observe. What the Sopherim did was, in most cases, to show that all these ways of practice of the written laws are in reality enfolded in the Law itself, if you only know how to read it. In other words, there are no new additions but unfolding of the contents of the Law. But that in their exegesis, they added new applications which widened the usage of the Laws so as to embrace new life conditions, goes without saying.

As an illustration of the insufficiency of the written Law, if taken literally, and that if it was practiced, it must necessarily have been supplemented both by direct Mosaic instruction and by old interpertation and custom, we will cite two cases. The first is the case of the Sabbath. The Pentateuch refers several times to the prohibitions of doing any work on the Sabbath (Exodus Ch. XX, 10; XXXI, 14, 15; XXXV, 2; Lev. XXIII, 3; Dt. V, 14), and the injunction that one who does desecrate the Sabbath is punished by death is likewise repeated several times, but nowhere is there a definition given as to what is meant by the term work. Only three performances of certain kind of labor are specified, kindling of fire (Ex. XXXV, 3), walking beyond a certain limit (Ex. XVI, 29), and cording or hewing of wood (Num. XV, 32–36). But, it is self-evident, that there are hundreds of forms of labor which fall under the term *work*. How then could the Sabbath be observed without any supplementary instruction as to what constitutes work and what not? Undoubtedly, such instructions and supplements have existed from the very time of the giving of the Law, and they were included in the Mosaic Oral Law. The subsequent ages have also added interpretations which helped to clarify the Law. As far as the Sabbath is concerned, we have direct reference to wider interpretations in ages previous to that of the Sopherim. Nowhere in the Pentateuch is there a direct prohibition of carrying burdens on the Sabbath. Yet, we find Jeremiah reproaching the people for that very offense (Jer. XVII, 21). Again, Nehemiah enforces the law of cessation of business with a strong hand, and even drove away the gentile traders who came to Jerusalem on the Sabbath (Nehem. XXIII, 15–23), though buying on the Sabbath is nowhere prohibited in the Pentateuch.

But it was the Sopherim who not only classified and organized all previous interpretations regarding work on the Sabbath, but actually classified and standardized the kinds of work prohibited, and what is more, by the method of exegesis, they showed that the written laws implied all these classes of work although they were not specified, and that these kinds of work are meant by the general term: *Kol Mlochah,* all work. Work, in general was divided into thirty-nine classes, each of which embraces a number of special labors, and they were called *Abot Melachoth,* i. e. heads of kinds of work. Each kind of work included in these classes may have one or more subspecies subsuming other works resembling the head species; these are denominated Tolodoth, i. e. kindred. Thus, the number of works prohibited on the Sabbath has considerably increased. Tradition asserts, though, that the thirty-nine classes of species of work were of Mosaic supplement. But the Sopherim derived them from the term work, itself. They proceeded something like the following: Starting to enlarge the term "all work" prohibited on the Sabbath, they compared it with another usage of the term in regard to the building of the Tabernacle (Ex. XXXVI, 7, 8; XXXIX, 43). There, the meaning is clear, for possessing a fair description of the building of the Tabernacle, we can safely calculate the kinds of work necessary for its construction. Upon investigation, it was found that they can be subsumed under thirty-nine classes. So consequently, by analogy, the term "all work" or "any work" employed with regard to the Sabbath also includes all these classes. And thus, the old oral supplements or instructions were brought in strict relation with the written Law, nay, it became the very unfolding of the literal meaning of the words themselves.

Another example is the law concerning the transfer of property. The Pentateuch refers a number of times to the buying and selling of houses or estates, stating that money was paid in the transaction, and even enacts certain laws about their redemption by the seller (Lev. XXV), but nowhere are there specific statements telling of the actual way in which property was to be transferred from one person to another, or when is such transfer invalid, and when valid. We cannot imagine, however, that the Jews during the first Commonwealth kept on buying and selling property without following certain strict laws or usages in these transactions. We must, therefore, assume that supplementary Mosaic laws existed on this subject which were augmented by adopted usage. In fact, we find Jeremiah giving us a detailed description of the process of transferring property (Jer. XXXII, 9–13). But these oral laws and usages had to be solidified and systematized. This work was again done by the scribes, who, interpreting that very passage in Jeremiah, have standardized these laws and usages and gave them legal solidity and they were henceforth invested with unquestionable validity.

Such examples might be multiplied considerably, for almost every precept in the Pentateuch needs supplementing and interpretation in order that it become a living practiced law. These two cases were only quoted in order to prove that the work of the scribes did not consist, as many scholars would like us believe, in building up a new system of oral laws which was grafted, by means of casuistic devices, upon a simple form of Judaism as embodied in the Pentateuch, but that a great part of what is called oral law did really exist in tradition along with the written law, even when in times of sin and waywardness, during the first period of Jewish history, it was observed only by the few. The scribes, in a time of religious revival when the needs of the individual called for scrupulous observance of law and expansion of religion, not only standardized these ancient laws and usages, but by interpretation, both analytic and synthetic, unfolded them out of the written law. Thus, the oral laws and supplements, though still remaining oral, received the status of written laws, since they were the outcome of their full meaning. That these activities and especially the method of interpretation opened the way for further study which led to a deepening of the religious feeling and which in turn brought about a craving for further expansion and development of law, thus bringing about new enactments of injunctions and regulations, goes without saying.

33. MIDRASH

This method of interpretation of the Bible used by the scribes, their very *modus operandi* described above, was designated by the name of *Midrash,* a word which is derived from the Hebrew root "darosh," i. e. to search or investigate. Its process was as follows: A verse from the Bible was quoted, and then it was commented upon, analyzed, and the new interpretation attached to it. And thus, the study of the Law was transmitted for a time, namely, the practical interpretation joined together with the verse. This method of Midrash was applied not only to matters of law and pure religious practice, but also to matters of ethics, theology, and belief, and thus gave rise to what is later known as Agada. For this purpose, the other books of the Bible were primarily utilized but of this later. (See sects. 50, 53.)

34. HALAKAH

But this method, useful as it may be as an instrument of interpretation and development of law, is cumbersome as a means of study, especially when study is oral and is transmitted primarily by memory. As time went on and interpretations were multiplied, laws amplified, oral transmission of the whole mass of Midrashic law became unwieldy and burdened the memory of the students. In addition, there were added laws of the scribes which were of a secondary character, namely, those that were not part of the ancient Oral Law nor derived by direct interpretation, but were enacted by them either as matters of exigency in accordance with the needs of the times, or as fences around the law (Syogim). These secondary laws added to the difficulty, and a new method was therefore adopted. The old form of motivated legal study was to a great extent abandoned and the mere legal statements alone, abstracted from the interpretation and motive, began to be used. This statement was termed Halakah. The meaning of the word seems to be derived from the Hebrew root Halok, i. e. to go, namely, a rule of conduct which people should follow. There began to be circulated groups of statements of Halakahs, about certain legal subjects whether religious, civil, or criminal law which stated very briefly, without reference to the Biblical verse or the enactments of the Sopherim, what is to be done in certain matters. For purposes of making the statements easy to be remembered, mnemonic devices were often used, such as numbering the cases when you are allowed to do a certain thing, or on the contrary when not. The old method, however, was not entirely abandoned, and was continued through the generations, and was later even improved upon by additional rules of interpretation as will be seen. But the new form began to prevail, and Halakah was transmitted from teacher to pupil. In time, the term Halakah came to denote the entire branch of practical religion. We do not exactly know the definite time when Halakah became the prevailing method of study. Some scholars would defer it to the time of Hillel, some to the end of the Maccabean Revolution, and some to the middle of it, toward the end of the first half of the second century B. C. E.[4] But it is most probable that the first layer of the Halakah was already in vogue at the close of the Sopheric period about the year 200.

Thus, the great period of intellectual activity of the Sopherim ended, leaving a great inheritance to the succeeding generations, which they increased and amplified but hardly changed its contents. The saying placed at the beginning of the Mishnaic treatise Aboth, or the Sayings of the Fathers, in the collective name of the Great Assembly, sums up in a measure the character and the nature of the activity of this remarkable group of men. They said: "Be deliberate in your judgment, raise many disciples, and make a fence around the Law" (Aboth, I, 1). Deliberation in judgement on all matters of law and religion is a primary necessity for any great religious activity, and certainly the Sopherim used deliberation in their analytic method of interpretation of the Torah. The next step in their activity was to increase the number of disciples to make study a popular matter and thus deepen and intensify study itself. Of equal importance was the last step, the fencing of the Law, the whole work of the men of the Great Synagogue in interpreting the Law and putting new meaning into it would have been endangered were they not to add, here and there, a fence and buttress in order to stabilize the entire structure.

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[4] On this subject, see Z. Lauterbach: Midrash and Mishnah, Chs. I, II.

35. THE ZUGOTH (Pairs)

With the death of Simon the Just (d. 180 B.C.E.), the Great Assembly seemed to cease functioning, or it assumed a different form. The sources are scanty and we have no clear conception of the inner life in Israel during that period. The times were turbulent, party strife ran high, and Judaism was headed for a crisis. The work of the Sopherim was about to be put to a severe test in the great struggle with Hellenism. Yet, it seems that intellectual activity on the lines laid down was carried on. In the treatise Aboth, there is even given almost a continuous chain of leading scholars, carrying on the tradition of study and religious leadership from Simon the Just to the close of the Mishnah. (210 C.E.). The leaders, from the time of Antigonos, the disciple of Simon, until after Hillel (d. 10 C.E.) are given in pairs. This period of intellectual activity is, therefore, denominated the period of the Zugoth, i.e. pairs of leaders. It has been told to us by later tradition that of the pairs mentioned, one of them was the Nasi, i.e. president, and the other, the Ab Beth Din, namely, the dean of the Sanhedrin, the highest court or religious council. Whether this Sanhedrin was modeled after the Great Assembly and embraced all functions, political and executive, as well as legislative and judicial, or that it was limited to the last two functions is a matter of history. What is important for us is to know that these pairs of leading scholars carried on the literary work, and thus layer after layer of Halakah was added. There was, likewise, a constant accretion in the field of theology and ethics, and a general thickening in the crust of religious life. The work of generations of scholars was about to enter the phase of organization, but then a challenge was hurled against it from somewhere. We do not know clearly the origin of the opposition, but it was ultimately crystallized and organized into definite opinion and new party strife arose in Judaism.

36. PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

When the smoke of the Maccabean wars cleared away, and the Maccabean prince, John Hyrcanus, sat securely on his throne, there came into view two parties in Jewry whose conflict of opinion left an indelible mark upon the development of Judaism; these were the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Of the two, it is the former party that is the most important and which really not only succeeded in surviving, but practically impressed the entire Judaism with its impress, and it is their literary activity which underlies the great literary structure of Post-Biblical literature.

Who were the Pharisees? As a group, they were the teachers who continued to develop the view and the activity of the Sopherim. The origin of their name, Hebrew, *Perushim,* is not quite certain. Some derive it from the root Parosh, meaning to interpret, which would indicate their chief attribute, namely, interpreters of the Law. Objections have been raised to this derivation. Others derived it from a similar root, Parosh, meaning to separate, as they kept themselves separated and distinct from the Ame-Haaratzim, i. e. the lower strata of the people who were not careful in the observances of the Law. Yet, we have the testimony of Josephus,[5] that they were beloved by the people and were their leaders. The result is that while as a small group they are said to be teachers and scribes, as a party, they comprised the popular party.

The Pharisees, kept on developing the Oral Law. Their fundamental point of view was like that of the Sopherim, that all these interpretations, all these applications of the Torah to life were also Torah, which though not written, can still claim that title, inasmuch as a part of it was most likely given by Moses himself as an oral explanation of the written laws, while another part is implicitly embodied in the words of the Pentateuch, and by interpretation, it becomes explicit. From this view, the interpretations themselves become Torah. To them, the Torah became the living word of God which continually gave forth new revelations, and was subject to interpretation. The supreme conception is that the Torah is more than mere law, but is the word of God, His great gift, the inexhaustible revelation of the Divine truth, inasmuch as it encompasses all forms of life, individual as well as national. To the Pharisee, therefore, the performance of the Torah was no burden but a joy. These sentiments were already beautifully expressed in Psalms XIX and CXIX, where the Torah is described to be like the sun, and what the latter is in nature, the former is in the sphere of the soul of man, and the performance of the precepts is like receiving the light of the sun, a pleasant act.

Thus, literary activity was carried on by the leaders of the Pharisees who were invariably scholars, and slowly the Halakah grew. In a similar fashion, layers of views and opinions in the field of ethics and theology and kindred subjects were compiled. These things were handed down from generation to generation. But all these teachings being oral, there arose differences of opinion, and even these differences were preserved so that the circle was widened.

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[5] Antiquities, book XIII, Ch. X, 5.

In the field of speculative religion, the Pharisees taught the immortality of the soul, and thus solved the great problem of suffering, namely, that the righteous were to be rewarded in the world after death. And as we have already indicated, they also inculcated the theory of resurrection which was connected with the Messianic age.

It is very often asserted that the Pharisees disregarded politics or the welfare of the nation for the sake of religion. This assertion is not true. They were as deeply interested in the political welfare of the Jews as the other parties. No doubt, there were some extremists among them, but the fact is that the zealots, who fought so bitterly for the freedom of Palestine were all Pharisees, and so were their leaders. What is true is that they were not ready to make concessions to political exigencies at the expense of religion. Their emphasis was laid on the religious and moral life of the nation, as well as that of the individual.

The Sadducees belonged more to the aristocratic stratum of the people, and consisted mostly of priests, hence their name Sadducees which is probably derived from the name of the ancestor of the most important priestly family, Zadok. This supposition is not, however, certain. We also find priests who were leaders among the Pharisees, and on the contrary, the very founders of the order of the scribes, Ezra was himself a priest. It is more preferable to accept in part the view of later tradition [6] which refers the establishment of this party to a man named Zadok, who was himself somewhat of a scholar, a disciple of Antigonos of Sacho who followed in religious leadership Simon the Just, as it contains an element of truth in it. For—while the whole view stating that Sadduceeism arose merely from a misinterpretation of a saying of Antigonos is untenable, the kernel of truth in it is that a man, not necessarily a priest, by the name of Zadok who was a leader among the aristocratic stratum of the population was the founder of the party. The opposition to the teaching of the popular scholars was smoldering for a time in the hearts of certain people until that Zadok gave formal expression to it. There was undoubtedly a political background to this antagonism. The leaders of the upper classes seeing the influence the scribes, or scholars, wielded upon the populace, and desiring to wrest the power from them, thought to undermine their influence by repudiating their entire teaching. Among the aristocrats, there were, of course, quite a number of priests, but the Sadducees were not primarily a priestly party. However, the whole outlook of the Sadducees is not very clear. Their principal view seemed to have been a strict adherence to the written law, and a rejection of the oral law, and its method of interpretation. From this point, they were really the conservative wing. But, inasmuch as they did not accept the mass of enactments and interpretations of the oral law, their life seemed *apparently* freer. They were in certain respects more ready than the Pharisees to make concessions to political exigencies, but on the whole, their view of the Torah to which they were devoted was inflexible, and as a result, with all their apparent liberality, they were unprogressive. Hence, their civil and penal law was more severe; they practiced the *lex Talionis* literally. It is not to be understood, however, that the Sadducees rejected the Pharasaic tradition altogether, as the Torah without interpretation can hardly be practiced as shown above, but they rejected the binding force of the principles of interpretation and allowed free play of private opinion.

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[6] Aboth di R. Nathan, An Agadic addition to Mishnaic Treatise Aboth, Ch. V.

They also seem to have denied reward and punishment in the other world and the existence of angels and spirits. They denied the Providence of God over the actions of the individual man. Yet, with all their worldliness, they did not manage to survive, and the saving of Judaism was left to the Pharisees.

This strife between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, though at times very severe, especially when the wrath of a Hasmonean prince inclined to the Sadduceean view entered into it, yet, it never interrupted the Pharasaic intellectual activity. The chain of traducers is not broken during all this period. And on the whole, there existed a more or less friendly relation between the leaders of both parties; they sat together in the Sanhedrin, and most likely there were a good number of concessions on the part of the Sadducees to the practical side of Pharasaism. We find distinct reference to such concession in Temple worship.[7]

One of the leaders of the Pharisees who is also one of the Zugoth is worthy of mention as his activity extends beyond mere legal scholasticism, and that is Simon ben Shotah. He was the brother of Queen Alexandra, and in her reign (76–69 B. C. E.), he was the acclaimed leader of the people. He introduced many important institutions, but the greatest of them was the laying of the foundation of the elementary school system among the Jews. He thus supplied the very basis of the strength of Judaism.

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[7] Yoma 18b, said a Sadduceean priest to his son, the high priest, "Although we are Sadducees, we fear the Pharisees," namely, we fear to depart from their accepted practices.

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZATION OF THE HALAKAH

A. TANNAIM AND THEIR METHOD

37. *GENERAL OBSERVATIONS*

Just as at the end of the period of the Sopherim there arose, on account of the multiplicity of Midrashic interpretations of the Bible, the need to abandon to a great extent the Midrash form of study and introduce that of Halakah, so likewise, at the end of the period of the Zugoth (about 30 B.C.E.), there arose for similar reasons the need of putting the great mass of Halakoth[1] which was constantly accumulating, into some organized form. The need was accentuated by the fact that since the study of the law became very popular, the number of teachers as well as that of the pupils greatly increased, and the increase brought about differences and variations both in the method of interpretations and in the forms of transmitted Halakoth.

As it was stated, the method of the Midrash was not entirely given up but continued along with the study of Halakah, new interpretations were, therefore, constantly pronounced by the teachers in the schools, from which new Halakic statements were abstracted. In addition, the new exigencies of life called forth new applications of older statements which in turn became Halakoth in themselves. All these teachings were transmitted orally by the pupils, and as all oral statements they were liable to change and differences according to the individual transmitters. Nor were the rules for interpretation firmly established, and one teacher might have used a rule which another one did not fairly approve of. Besides, there were current a number of Halakoth, the Biblical proof for which was forgotten, but which nevertheless were true and accepted. This state of affairs gave rise to a double need, first to organize the Halakoth proper, to give them a stabilized form, to expand them when necessary, to harmonize contradictions, to choose between two different versions, and to make them at times more flexible to meet new conditions; secondly, to relate any of them back to the Bible by the old method of Midrash, which now needed a set of fast and standard rules to prevent the use of individual methods.

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[1] The term Halakah is applied in a double sense, first as one signifying the entire legal study and discussion, second denoting a single legal statement. In the second sense it has a plural Halakoth, i. e. legal statements.

38. TANNAIM

As the central point of interest lay now in the organization of the Halakah which was by this time of great bulk extending to all phases of life, while interpretation or Midrash was of lesser importance, merely a means of showing Scriptural proof for those Halakoth that did not already possess one, or even to add from time to time a new rule, the teachers from now on were, therefore, designated by the name of Tannaim, i. e. teachers. This name is derived from the Aramaic root *Tnē,* to tell or to teach, for the chief task of these scholars was to teach the application of the laws and rules to life, namely, what is the exact form of the Halakah and how it should be understood, and other things connected with such matters. The teaching itself went by the name of Mishnah, which is derived from *Shano,* a similar Hebrew root which means to repeat, and later acquired the meaning of study. The name was used to designate the work of the scholars both as study and as an act, namely, the mere repeating of the rules, laws, and regulations as well as the introducing of proper modifications. This period lasted for about 250 years, from about 30 B. C. E. to 210 C. E., namely, from the time of Hillel to that of Judah Haasi, i. e. the Prince. During this whole period, the process of organization of the great mass of Halakah went on until it culminated in the compilation of the Mishnah, the summary and sum total of the Oral Law. Many were the workers in this field, each one contributing his number of bricks to the great Edifice, but the master builders were few, and they can be limited to five, Hillel, Johanan ben Zakkai, Akiba, Rabbi Meir, and Judah, the Prince. These names are the outstanding ones in the great company of Tannaim, and rise even from the midst of a long line of intellectual giants.

39. HILLEL

The first one was Hillel. His personality was a remarkable one, and, as a matter of fact, the influence of his personality equaled that of his instruction. He was a Babylonian by birth, and hailed from a very distinguished family, in fact, a descendant on his mother's side from the Davidic dynasty. The folk mind has embellished his early efforts for the study of the Law with beautiful stories. But when he is revealed to us in history, he is the full-fledged scholar. By a fortunate incident, he was elevated to the presidency of the Sanhedrin in the year 30 B.C.E. and for forty years, he guided the spiritual destinies of the Jews.

Hillel, first of all, set himself to the task of standardizing the methods of interpretation of the Law, namely, the various systems of the Midrash. After examining the rules used by previous scholars, he selected a few of these rules as logically sound, or as those that had the approval of generations, and adding some of his own he laid down a canon of seven rules of interpretation which henceforth became the adopted instruments of the Midrashic method. The introduction of this canon brought about, on the one hand, an extension of the field of study by making it possible of deriving new Halakoth from the Torah, as well as relating new decisions to Biblical sources; on the other hand, it checked an undue growth of deriving Halakoth from the Pentateuch, for henceforth, every new derivation was tested whether it was made according to the rules. It is also possible that the rules were used retroactively, namely, that a number of Halakoth which were current in the schools but had no sound reason for their basis were likewise tested by these rules, and if they could not be traced back to the Pentateuch were disqualified. These rules made also possible an adjustment of laws to life, even when the Bible seems to be explicit on the point. The classical example of such adjustment is Hillel's institution of the *Prosboul* which enabled people to lend money to the needy without running a chance of forfeiting the loan at the end of the Sabbatical year (Shemitah) as such is the case according to the Biblical Shemitah law (Deut. XV, 1–4). The obviation of the risk of forfeiting loans in the Sabbatical year is carried out by means of handing in to court a document signed by the lender, wherein the lender notified the court that he intends to collect all the enumerated debts at any time he will please. This document is attested by witness. The name Prosboul is Greek, a combination of two Greek words, *Pros Bouleh,* i.e. in the presence of the council, referring to the document which is given in the presence of the court.

The legal reason for this institution is usually explained to be, that when debts are turned over to court, they are considered as collected, and hence, the law of forfeiture of debts does not apply to this kind, since they are already legally collected. The real reason is, however, a dexterously applied interpretation of the verses 2 and 3 in Deuteronomy Ch. XV. We thus see the role analytic interpretation played in adjustment of law to life.

The sifting and testing of older Halakoth by means of the rules of interpretation, called forth, most likely, an endeavor to classify the various layers of Halakahs in general, as well as to organize them according to a certain system. It is most probable that Hillel began this most important work. A later Gaonic tradition [2] insists that Hillel and his colleague, Shammai, laid down the six great divisions of the Mishnah which we usually call Orders. But although we have no means to verify the exact nature of this tradition, nor to determine the character of that organization, yet, there is good reason to assume that Hillel possibly with the help of Shammai did lay the foundation of future collections.

He was also great, as stated, in his personality. He became the model of conduct and acted as a type of leader who personified the Jewish ideal of peace and loving-kindness. Around his name, there cluster a number of stories which characterize his outstanding personality. His ethical influence was great, and he epitomized the ethics of Judaism in one famous maxim: "Do not unto others that which is hateful to thee." This saying was very often misinterpreted and even such a great and deep thinker as Immanuel Kant had taken it to be merely an injunction not to harm others. In reality, however, in spite of its negative form, the content is positive. It should be understood to mean: Do not unto others that which thou wouldst not have desired to have done unto thee if thou wert placed in the other fellow's position. It is thus, though taking human desires as a basis of ethics, wide and extensive, includes positive acts as well as negative. We will quote one instance: Suppose a man sees another one in distress, it is his duty to offer him succor, for were he in the same position of distress, he certainly would not have desired to be left without help, hence, he must not do unto the other man what he would not have desired to have done unto him, and consequently, he is to offer him help. The possible reason why Hillel put his maxim in a negative form is to accentuate the psychological reason for doing good by calling in sympathy as a motive.

Hillel's colleague, Shammai, is represented as a sterner man, and his teaching was of a more conservative nature. We do not know exactly his method of interpretation, but it seemed to have been of a simpler nature, following closer the literal meaning of the verse, hence, it was often not in agreement with a changed form of life, and consequently, his Halakah is, on the whole, though exceptions abound, a severe one. Besides, Shammai very seldom analyzed the phases of a certain prohibition or measure, but accepted it *in toto* to apply to all cases irrespective of variation.

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[2] Hai Gaon (969–1038) in a responsum, No. 20, in the Responsa collection, Shaare Teshubah.

40. THE SCHOOLS OF HILLEL AND SHAMMAI

These two founded two schools which were known as Shammaites and Hillelites (Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel). The members of the schools carried the divers teachings of the masters into practice. As the days were turbulent and the authority of the Sanhedrin declined considerably under Herod and his successor Archelaus, there was nobody with sufficient authoritative power to decide between these two tendencies, and thus the divergence between the schools increased and Halakoth multiplied in different versions and variations. A later scholar bewails the fact that from the time of Hillel and Shammai, division arose among the scholars on account of disciples who did not study sufficiently at the feet of their masters, and thus the Torah became split into two Toroth, i. e. two different ways of teaching.

The schools existed for about one hundred years until finally the Hillelites prevailed as their teachings were more adaptable to life and more flexible, besides, they were also based on more logically sound methods of interpretation and analysis.

41. JOHANAN BEN ZAKKAI

A great impetus towards the strengthening of the literary, activity as well as towards the organization of the Halakah was the destruction of the Commonwealth. The political structure was shattered, the religious center was destroyed, and Israel was forced to construct another spiritual center which should radiate influence to all the scattered members of Jewry wherever they were. This new center was established by R. Johanan ben Zakkai at Jamnia (Jabne) in Judea. Thither was carried all their spiritual wealth, and scholars and students sat together forging the links which were destined to bind the parts of the Jewish people into one whole. This center was not merely a university, but also the seat of the High Court—the Sanhedrin which was a central authority whence decisions went forth, affecting all forms of life.

The leaders of Israel were as equally interested in civil law as in the purely religious, and they formed and molded opinions and views with the same zeal and ardor as legal interpretations. This court, which should rather be called Senate, held in its hand all the threads of spiritual life of all Jewries of exile. It fixed the calendar, it licensed the judges and teachers, and very often directed the political life, at least whatever was left of that life.

The central figure during the first decade of the existence of this center was, of course, the founder, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai. He made a number of regulations intended to strengthen the new center, investing it with the dignity of authority formerly held by the Sanhedrin at the Temple court. But he centered his activity upon the fixation and organization of the Law. He seemed to be instrumental in making the Hillelite view prevail, being himself a disciple of Hillel.

Another step in that direction was the actual compilation of certain groups of Halakoth which bore on Temple worship. This particular phase of law was threatened by the danger that it might be forgotten, since it was no more in use. In order to avert that danger, the older scholars, most of them priests themselves who participated in the worship, were called together and each one described from memory how certain phases of Temple worship were put into practice. Thus, we have records that the first edition of the treatise included in the Mishnah named Yoma, i. e. the day, referring to the Day of Atonement, where the details of the Temple worship on that day are given, was then compiled by a scholar named Simon (Ish ha-Mitzpa), who formerly acted as a kind of supervisor in the Temple court. Similarly, two other treatises, one relating to the description of the Temple itself, Midoth, i. e. measurements, and the other describing the morning services at that place and called *Tamid,* after the name of the daily sacrifice, were also roughly outlined then by priests or scholars who were otherwise close to the Temple service. And so parts of the Mishnah began to be consolidated.

42. THE JABNE CENTER

The activity of Johanan ben Zakkai at Jabne was of short duration, as he was a very old man at the time of the destruction of the Temple, and it could not have lasted more than a decade. But short as it was, it was of lasting value. The impetus given by him for consolidation of the work of the Law was taken up by his disciples. There was an enormous mass of work to be accomplished before the actual structure of the Mishnah, the standard text of the Oral Law, could have been constructed. First, older traditions embodied in different versions of Halakoth had to be verified, differences between scholars straightened out, and scattered statements collected. Besides, when literary activity took a fresh start, it did not limit itself to conserve the old traditional study, but broke clear new paths, especially in interpretation.

A strong desire animated the Jabne scholars to find a basis for almost every Halakic statement and regulation in the Torah itself, i. e. the Pentateuch, and thus the old method of Midrash was extended. Not only were the rules of Hillel employed in their widest capacity, but new rules were added and the older ones expanded. These two tendencies, the standardization of the Halakah on the one hand, and the expansion of interpretation on the other hand, occupied the minds of the scholars at Jabne, the second generation of Tannaim. The leaders of that generation were: the Patriarch Gamaliel the Second, the two of the disciples of Johanan, namely, Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Hyrkanus, and Rabbi Joshua, the son of Hannania, Rabbi Eliezer represented the Shammaitic tendency while the Patriarch and Joshua followed the Hillelites. Thus, differences were not as yet abolished. True, Raban Gamaliel attempted to follow Johanan in making the Hillelite view prevail. But his method was somewhat harsh, and a rebellion broke out among the scholars and Gamaliel was deposed.

This rather revolutionary act was a source of blessing in disguise as it brought the work of consolidation a step nearer. A great gathering was assembled, probably about the year 90 C. E. on the occasion of the deposition of the president, Raban Gamaliel, which met for some time, and at which grouping and collecting scattered statements on all parts of law and even on opinions and views was undertaken. Many doubtful cases were cleared up at this session which is usually called *That Day* (Otho ha-Yom), though as said, it met for a number of days. These doubtful cases on which decision was reached, mostly by testimony of older scholars, were compiled in one group, an enlarged edition of which was later incorporated in the Mishnah under the name of Eduioth, i. e. testimonies.

The second important work of that assembly was the revision of the various layers of the Halakah and smoothening and sifting out the outstanding differences between the two schools, the Hillelites and the Shammaites. Their opinions were tested and those which stood the test were adopted irrespective of party lines. Yet, it seems that the Hillelite view prevailed even then, though not because of any personal inclination but on account of its soundness of method. But in addition, a number of Shammaite Halakoth were adopted when they were found to be better founded. Thus, the long party strife in the realm of the spiritual came to an end. Differences, of course, still prevailed but they were more of the nature of differences between individual scholars rather than group differences.

It seems also that the second generation of Tannaim began to gather separate collections of Halakic statements grouped around certain subjects, so that consequently, the extensive material of the Oral Law which was for generations in a state of flux began to solidify in parts and form the building material for the structure which was soon to be erected. Simultaneously, with the activity of standardization, the name Mishnah came more and more into vogue. It began to be used as a term for collections of individual scholars, and were usually called the Mishnah of this one, or that one.

B. Early Mishnaic and Other Halakic Collections

43. THE WORK OF RABBI ISMAEL

Many and great were the scholars that made up the third generation of Tannaim. Each one of them contributed his share towards the organization of the Oral Law. But in the center of this great generation there stand out two great personalities, and of the two, the second is the greater, these are Rabbi Ismael and Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph. In these two, there culminated the process of interpretation which went on for generations and reached the highest point to such a degree that it practically comes to an end. Both of these men also gave a strong impetus to the organization of the Halakah.

Rabbi Ismael, in his love to relate every rule and Halakic regulation to the Bible, found it necessary in order to meet his extended interpretation to expand the rules of this method. He, therefore, increased the seven rules of Hillel to thirteen. He also made some kind of collection of motivated Halakoth, namely, where the rules are given together with their basis, the interpretation of the verse. This collection was arranged as a commentary on the Book of Exodus beginning with Chapter XII to the end of the book. This was the first kind of collection of such motivated Halakoth arranged in proper order, and a great part of it was incorporated in a later commentary on the same Biblical book bearing the peculiar name of *Mekilta,* i. e. measures and divisions, probably originally meaning groups, referring to the group arrangement of statements. R. Ishmael is said to be the author of the *Mekilta* which has come down to us, but as said, his collection most likely supplied only the nucleus, and the one we possess is from much later hand. R. Ismael's activity in compiling Halakoth served as an example to subsequent compilers of motivated Halakah, which books are known as Tannaitic Midrashim, namely, compilation of statements derived or based on Midrash, i. e. interpretation.

44. RABBI AKIBA AND HIS DISCIPLES

Greater than all scholars of his generation was Rabbi Akiba. He, whose life was romantic and death tragic, left his impress upon the succeeding generations, and later tradition ascribed to him unsurpassing greatness. He can be properly considered as the architect of the structure of Halakah in the widest sense as embodied both in the standard collection of unmotivated one, the Mishnah, and the motivated collection of Halakah, i. e. the Midrashim. But he was more than the architect, he actually erected the frame of that building. Rabbi Akiba's activity represents first of all the zenith of extended interpretation. To him, study of the law was not only a means for practical decision, but a joy and an art. He was, therefore, carried away by his enthusiasm, and his system of interpretations was so extensive that at times it bordered on the casuistic. He is said by later generations to have interpreted every letter in the Torah, even every superfluous dot. His motive was the same as that of the other scholars, namely, to find a reason in the Bible for every possible legal rule and regulation, and hence it was many times forced. Even his colleagues, who respected him greatly, very often rebuked him for his strange methods of interpretation.

Yet, though Akiba was engrossed with the intense ardor of his great soul to increase and deepen the study of the Halakah by the methods of interpretation, he devoted himself, as stated, with equal zeal to the great task of its organization. It was he who, as said, erected the very frame of the Mishnah. It is told of him that he made the Oral Law like a chain of rings,[3] by which is to be understood that he introduced or more probably completed the grouping of the Halakoth into definite divisions and subdivisions, such as books and chapters, so that it was thoroughly systematized. We are even told that he himself made an extensive Mishnaic compilation which were called the Great Mishnoth. He also stimulated the compilation of collections of motivated Halakoth, which, like that of Rabbi Ismael, were arranged as commentaries on the various books of the Bible, i. e. Halakic Midrashim. This particular work was the task of one of his disciples as we will soon see, but he was the moving spirit in all this activity.

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[3] Aboth Di Rabbi Nathan, Ch. XVIII.

The spirit of Rabbi Akiba was too great to be limited to one field of endeavor, no matter how extensive it might have been. We, therefore, find that it roamed over the entire domain of spirituality. He was deeply interested in Agada (See Sect. d) as in Halakah and his contribution to the organization and systematization of Jewish opinion and dogmatic view of Judaism was considered of such importance, that it was incorporated in the Mishnah and passed as the standard opinion. And taking into consideration that in addition to this remarkable and exceptionally productive activity, Akiba possessed also a great personality, it is no wonder then that the succeeding generations paid him the homage they did and spoke of him as the beacon light of the ages.

The fourth generation of Tannaim carried on its activity under great mental and physical stress. The times were turbulent, the disastrous war of Bar Kochba and the subsequent Hadrianic persecutions wrought havoc in the Palestinian Jewry, for a time the schools were closed and the disciples were dispersed, and it took great effort to reopen the ancient seats of learning. At such a time, the need for completing the work of the organization of the Oral Law begun previously became a pressing one. The leaders in this work as well as in the entire intellectual activity were the disciples of Rabbi Akiba and of them the most distinguished were R. Judah, R. Meir, R. Simon, and R. Jose, the son of Halafta.

Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Simon were primarily interested in the work of compiling motivated Halakah, i. e. Midrashic commentaries on the books of the Pentateuch. Judah compiled such a commentary on Leviticus. He was most likely only carrying out the instructions and the rules of the great master Akiba. As in the case of the *Meḳilta* (Sect. 43), the halakic midrash to Leviticus which we possess and the authorship of which is ascribed to Judah, is not really his but emanated from a later hand, still it undoubtedly contains his collection as a nucleus. That collection bears the name of *Sifrah,* i. e. the book, and it is possible that it is the original name of Judah's collection. Rabbi Simon collected motivated Halakoth to the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy which likewise were incorporated in a later collection that we possess and which bears the name of Siphrē, i. e. the books. He also compiled a similar commentary on Exodus which seemed to have been named *Mekilta* like that of R. Ismael.

Rabbi Meir, though resembling in mental acumen his great master Akiba, did not employ that acumen in dialectic interpretation, no matter how skilled he was in it, but devoted himself to the organization of the unmotivated Halakah, i. e. Mishnah. Working on the basis of the arrangement of Rabbi Akiba, he compiled a Mishnah of his own which seemed to have been of such nature of completeness and improvement that it is quite possible that the standard Mishnah we possess is only an improved and redacted edition of it. Rabbi Meir not only compiled Halakic statements, tested them, and sifted the material, but also attempted to decide between the different opinions and the one which he thought best he quoted anonymously, thus indicating his approval of it. By this method, the Mishnah became a very serviceable instrument. This method was later adopted in the final Mishnah. Rabbi Meir was like his master, a man of many parts, and possessed a great personality. He was a master of Agada and one who delved in mysteries of philosophic thought, and besides he possessed a charming style, being especially known as a fabulist. All these qualities gave him the desired influence, and his compilation became the outstanding one. The structure was almost complete, but still it lacked much and many were the rifts and loose stones. It awaited the master builder.

C. The Mishnah

45. THE REDACTOR OF THE MISHNAH, JUDAH, THE PRINCE

The one who perfected the Mishnah and perfected it in such a manner that it could weather the buffeting of the ages was Judah Hanasi, i. e. the Prince, whom later ages called by the title of Rabbi, master.

Judah, the son of Simon ben Camaliel (135–219) was well fitted to undertake the task. He was the undisputed head of the Great Court, the Sanhedrin, the patriarch recognized by all Jewry and even by the Roman government, as testify the stories which were circulated about him of his friendly relation with the Roman Emperor, Antoninus. He was rich and of extensive influence. Yet, he was modest and of pleasant character, so that his colleagues willingly submitted to his authority and cheerfully coöperated with him. In order to prepare himself for this task, he visited various academies maintained by the pupils of the great Akiba, examined their collections, and compared notes. But he spent the greatest part of his time at the school of R. Meir. It was undoubtedly his collection that was taken by Judah as the basis of his Mishnah, but we would be mistaken were we to assume that all that Judah did was to edit the text of R. Meir. Judah also added a considerable amount of new material which he extracted from other collections, for, as said, he studied in various schools. Later scholars said that Judah possessed thirteen collections of Mishnoth. Whether the number is correct or not is immaterial, but the fact is that Judah practically rebuilt the Mishnah and gave it his individual impress.

There was a threefold purpose set before him. First, to bring order and unity in the activity of the development of the Oral Law so that it should not deviate into strange paths. Secondly, to give the students a *text* which shall serve them as a guide in their studies, and thirdly, that it shall become a code of laws in accordance with which the teachers shall be able to render decisions in practical cases. The Mishnah is, therefore, constructed in such a way so as to meet all these aims. It is bulky and contains all Halakic statements even on subjects which after the destruction of the Temple had no more validity, such as the laws relating to the Temple, its service and sacrifice, or laws of purity intimately connected with them. On the other hand, it is also exclusive, not all the statements were collected but only the important ones, and thousands were left out. Finally, a definite attempt is made to decide between the opinion of scholars on all matters practical, or otherwise important. This is done by quoting the accepted opinion anonymously (Heb. Setam). But still, we must not construe the codifying purpose strictly. It is not a mere code, for otherwise no different opinions would be given. The Mishnah did not want to stop study and research, and therefore contrary opinions to those accepted were given, and these bear the names of the holders of these opinions. Likewise, we very often find an opinion given anonymously, and later a controversy about the same is given, which indicates that the former opinion must not be taken as absolutely authoritative. We meet also two contrary anonymous statements, all of which indicate that Judah left a place for liberty of research and opinion.

46. MANNER OF REDACTION

The redaction of the Mishnah was not carried out by Rabbi Judah himself, nor was it the work of a day or even a year. The process of redaction went on for some time, and it was done by a collegium among which were the greatest scholars of the generation who worked with Judah.

47. FORM AND DIVISION OF THE MISHNAH

The entire collection is divided into six orders (Heb. Seder, pl. Sedorim); each order into tractates (Heb. Masecheth, literally, a web on account of the subjects being woven together); each tractate into chapters (Heb. Perek, i. e. a joint or a link) and each chapter into sections, called Mishnah or Halakah.

The six orders are: (*1*). Zeraim, i. e. seeds dealing with all laws relating to agriculture and all precepts containing the performance of ceremonies having any connection with the tilling of the soil or with its fruits and plants. (2) Moed, containing all laws relating to the observance of the holidays including the Sabbath. (*3*). Nashim, literally women, containing all laws relating to the family, as well as all possible laws arising from such relations. (*4*). Nesikin, i. e. damages, containing all civil and criminal laws including regulations concerning courts and form of court procedure. (*5*). Kadashim, i. e. holy things, comprising laws and regulations concerning the sacrifices, temple service, as well as the dietary laws which were considered a form of holiness and distinction. (*6*). Taharoth, laws of purity and impurity.

The possible reason for this adopted order is as follows. The first thing in the life of man is his work, and as the chief work at the time was agriculture, it was deemed necessary to place Zeraim first. To this order is prefaced the treatise Berakoth on prayer and benediction which enunciates the principle of the existence of God in a practical way by describing the form and manner of His worship. Next in order of importance in a man's life is rest, and hence Moed, on holidays and days of rest, their description and regulations comes next. The third step in the cycle of human life is the family life, where-fore the order of Nashim succeeds Moed. After the family, society and its relations are next in importance, and therefore Nezikin was placed after Nashim. Kadashim and Taharoth, being as they deal with laws not practiced after the destruction of the Temple, were placed last.

48. THE CHARACTER OF THE MISHNAH

As stated, the Mishnah is both a textbook for the study of Oral Law and a code. But in its latter capacity, it was not meant to be so in the strict meaning of the term. It was rather meant to be a guide pointing as to which legal opinion should be adopted. But in giving all other opinions on the subject, it left room to the later scholars to follow a different opinion than the one adopted by the compiler. However, as a rule, the decision of the Mishnah was usually followed. The method of decision was pointed out above, as being that of quoting the right opinion anonymously. But the redactor or redactors used also a supplementary method and that is by quoting the opinion of an individual in the name of the *wise* (Hahomim) which means that this opinion was considered by the redactor to be as important as if it were so pronounced by a majority. By using these devices, the editor of the Mishnah accomplished his aim to give the final form of standardization to the Halakah, without at the same time impairing its further development.

The Mishnah, however, was intended to be more than a mere combination of text and code of laws; it also aimed to standardize to a certain degree Jewish opinion, and inculcate the principles of Judaism and Jewish conduct as well as to preserve the records of ancient Jewish customs which show the sanctity of certain institutions. For this purpose, a certain number of selected Agadic Mishnoth were included, sixty-five in all, besides a special treatise on conduct, Pirke Aboth, i. e. the Saying of the Fathers (on its character see below).

Of the dogmas emphasized in the Mishnah, the most important are, first of all, the unity of God, the recital of its formula (Shema) being the first subject discussed in the opening passage of the entire book. This dogma is given a good deal of prominence, and it is mentioned a number of times in various ways. Along with unity, God's Providence is likewise emphasized, and on several occasions it is distinctly stated that there is no duplicity in Providence, but that good and evil happenings both emanate from the same Divine Power (Berakoth Ch. V, 3; IX, 5; Megillah IV, 9 and other places). Next in importance come reward and punishment both in this world and the hereafter, freedom of the will, the coming of the Messiah, the revealed authority of the Torah (literally Torah Min Hashomaim), i. e. that the Torah was given from Heaven, and resurrection.

These last two were given special emphasis, and an opinion was expressed that the one who denies these two beliefs will be excluded from sharing the happiness of the last days (Olam ha-Bo, i. e. the world to come). The reason for the stringency is most likely that these two beliefs were strongly impugned, at the time, by the Judæo-Christians who denied the validity of the Torah and gave a different interpretation of the resurrection and the last days. To strengthen these two cardinal beliefs, the promised penalty was included. Yet, with all attempts at standardization of opinion, no strict and close definition of some of the dogmas was fixed, and room was left for later commentators and interpreters to apply a measure of latitude in their interpretation.

Of Jewish religious and social ideals, there are three outstanding ones which deserve mention, love of God is inculcated even to the very last. Basing itself on the verse in Deut. VI, 5, "And thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul," it interprets the last words literally and says, "That man is to love God even when He takes away his soul, namely, no matter what great punishment is inflicted upon him, he is still to love God" (Berakoth IX, 5). The second great ideal or principle inculcated is the value of the inner meaning of the performance of precepts (Kavanah). It is said, "Both the one whose offering to the Temple is much, and the one whose offering is little will be considered equally pious, provided each one's act is directed for the sake of God" (Menahoth XIII, II). In other words, the inner meaning of the act is the determining factor in its value. The ideal of peace is the third one emphasized. The Mishnah closes with the statement that "God has not found any other instrument of blessing for Israel except peace."

To the principles of conduct, there is devoted, as we said, a whole treatise, but there are many more statements incorporated in the Mishnah which bear on the subject. The editor had even gone so far as to include customs which illustrate the ethical character of institutions. To such a class belongs the recording of the custom of the daughters of Jerusalem who used to hold dances among the vineyards on the fifteenth of Ab and the Day of Atonement, and while dancing make pithy remarks to the young men around. The pretty ones among them eulogized beauty as the quality most desired in a woman for the purposes of marriage, the homelier who were of noble descent praised the value of family, the humble who possessed neither, sang of good character, quoting Proverbs XXXI, 30, "Favor is deceitful and vain is beauty;

a God-fearing woman, she alone shall be praised." The last quality seems to be emphasized by the Mishnah, thus giving us a more or less accepted view of marriage.

49. *ARRANGEMENT OF THE MISHNAH*

The Mishnah, as a whole, possesses a well-defined logical arrangement of division of subjects. As indicated, there are six general classes of subjects, i. e. Orders, which are divided into sixty-three subdivisions or tractates which are further divided into chapters. In each of these divisions, there is a coherence between the central theme and the subdivisions which describe a phase or a portion of the subject. Yet, in an attempt to erect a grandiose structure from a mass of single statements and decisions, it is inevitable that here and there, there shall be a loose stone, a rift, and at times, even a whole section is somewhat loosely connected to the other sections. Sometimes a chapter is included in a book or even a treatise in an order; merely by dint of the technical similarity of its subject rather than by strict logical classification. As for the lowest subdivision, namely, grouping the Mishnoth in chapters, there it seems the technical or verbal similarity played an important part, and prominence is often given to it at the expense of unity of subject. We often find in the Mishnah groups of Halakoth, the members of which treat of diverse subjects; their similarity consists in a certain stereotyped phrase which is repeated in each of them, and hence they succeed each other irrespective of the fact that they interrupt the unity of the chapter. These groups were undoubtedly incorporated in the Mishnah from older collections where the literary formula served as a mnemonic device for the students.[4]

50. *THE STYLE AND EDITIONS OF THE MISHNAH*

The Mishnah represents not only a great scholastic effort, but a great literary achievement from the point of view of style, and contributed greatly to the development of Hebrew language, especially the Hebrew prose. Its language is comparatively pure Hebrew. It is true that we find there quite a considerable number of words which are not mentioned in the Scriptures, but we must not conclude that they are all borrowed or invented by the compilers. They might have been in use in the popular language, but were not quoted in the Bible on account of its limited field. After all, the Bible deals primarily with

[4] See L. Ginzberg, "Zur Entstehungs geschichte der Mischna," in Hoffman's Festschuft.

higher subjects and hardly touches the everyday phases of life while the Mishnah is all-inclusive. On the other hand, the Mishnah did borrow a number of words especially from the Aramaic and also from Greek and Latin, the other two languages current in Palestine, but in most cases, an attempt was made to Hebraize them in form. The admixture of Aramaic helped to add to the stately Hebrew a certain flexity and elasticity which enables it to express the various shades of meaning implied in the usage of legal terms.

The style of the Mishnah is not absolutely homogeneous. On the contrary, there are discerned in it the styles of the various scholars whose names are attached to the opinions quoted as well as the older style of the older collections. Judah, the Prince, was careful to quote the opinions in their original language, but on the whole collection, there is impressed the unifying spirit of the compiler.

The style, especially in the Halakic part which constitutes the bulk of the Mishnah, is terse and concise, yet use is made of pithy sayings and legal maxims which soften the otherwise austere aspect. In the Agadic portion, the style often waxes poetic, and many an expression of the Mishnah has become a popular saying and formed a part of the vernacular of the average intelligent Jew. The Mishnah has undergone two editions in the lifetime of Judah. The first was prepared by him in his younger days, and a second revised one in his later years. There were undoubtedly some changes introduced in the text of the Mishnah in later years, but these are comparatively slight. On the whole, it remained as it emanated from the hands of its great editor. The Mishnah became the great source of the supplementary law known as Oral Law, which henceforth, was no more oral since it was written down. And not in vain did many of the Christian Fathers call it the Second Scriptures, deriving the name Mishnah from Hebrew, i. e. *Shano* to repeat, for it is really the second great book of the Jews after the Bible.

D. The Agada

51. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE AGADA

We had occasion to refer several times to the Agada in the course of our narrative on the organization of the Oral Law, but as this form of Jewish literature is of such importance that without at least a general understanding of its nature and character, one can hardly estimate the profoundness of the Jewish spirit, it deserves a section for itself.

Agada is the general name for the greatest diversified mass of Jewish literature which purpose is to complement the teaching of the Halakah, which primarily defines the practical way of living, namely, what to do and what not to do in the course of daily life, by instruction in views, opinions, and ethical maxims touching both on the life of the individual and that of the nation in all their phases. Its character is indicated in the very name it bears which literally signified both saying and instruction, being derived from the Hebrew root Nagod, which in its "hiphil" (causative) form haged means to say or to impart instruction. The Hebrew form is hagada and the Aramaic Agada.

It is encyclopedic in character and contains a multitude of subjects including besides matters of religion, ethics, and history, also some elements of the sciences such as the rudiments of medicine, mathematics, and especially astronomy. Its period of development is a very long one and extends for over a thousand years; some of its early layers go back to Biblical times.

52. *ELEMENTS AND CLASSES OF AGADA*

In general, there are to be discerned in the Agada two elements, one contributed by the folk mind, and the other, the gift of the sage and the scholar. The first consists of stories and legends which began to cluster, in comparatively early times, about the lives of famous historical persons, or even about episodes in the past. The Bible forms, of course, the center of these embellishments. The other consists of a conscious effort on the part of the sages to make the entire Bible, not only the Pentateuch but the historical, prophetic, and poetic parts as well, a source of inspiration for the people. This effort expressed itself in commenting upon the Bible and its interpretation.[5] The folk embellishments of history may date back to pre-exilic times, but received their developed form during the period of great activity in the Second Commonwealth when supplementary books to the Bible began to be written, i. e. those books known as Apocrypha and Apocalyptic (see Ch. I). As we remarked above, a great part of the older Agada is preserved there, but only a part, as the popular Agadic current was much larger. The origin of the other element may be dated back to the great religious revival under Ezra. When the Torah began to be read publicly and expounded, it was explained both ways from the point of view of ethical and inspirational teaching and from the point of view of law. It was thus the first expression of homiletic teaching. It was, of course, oral and employed the same method of Midrash, applying it to all its parts. But, as the subject-matter of Agada is primarily thought and feeling, it gradually widened and swelled like a river fed by numerous springs and brooklets.

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[5] For some elucidating remarks on the subject, see L. Ginzberg in, Preface to The Legends of the Jews, Vol. I.

As the vicissitudes of national life multiplied during the turbulent centuries of the Second Commonwealth, as the experiences of the nation were enriched by persecution and struggle, by triumph and hope for complete redemption, as new ideas were increased both by contact with other cultures and by Jewish reaction to their encroachment, they all found expression in the constantly growing Agada. The interpretation of the Bible in all its parts had to be strained to the utmost to provide spiritual food for the people. It had to absorb all other elements, such as stories, proverbs, allegories, bits of metaphysics or even science and many more forms of literature. It thus happened to Agada what happened to the legal inquiry and study. It had to be divided into two parts, one which was always connected with the interpretation of the Bible, and the other which consisted of groups of stories, ethical sayings, proverbs, even general conduct maxims bearing upon ordinary phases of life, such as health preserving, the arts, industries, domestic economy, etc. It is most possible that these groups of Agadic statements were written down in books, which were known as books of Agada, and were circulated among the people, even before the destruction of the Second Temple. But the interpretative Agada continued to grow and increase through the activity of the preachers who sermonized every Sabbath and festive days in the synagogues. The lines of division between these two kinds of Agada were often overstepped, and the two types of spiritual teaching frequently amalgamated.

With the destruction of the Temple and the intensifying of Jewish persecution, an increased demand was made upon the Agada, namely, to supply comfort to the downtrodden and inspire them with hope that they bear their misery more easily. This, together with other demands arising from life in exile which was constantly changing and becoming more complex, taxed the ingenuity of the preachers and the sages. And consequently, they used all methods in order to ably discharge their function as teachers and guides of the people. Using the Biblical text as a peg, they hung on it all kinds of teachings, sometimes touching on ethics, sometimes giving extensively the biography of a hero, and at times taking for a subject the suffering of the Jews, at other times, their glorious future, and at still others, the coming doom of the oppressing nations. Thus, the web of the Agada was woven, trangressing all lines and divisions, like a parti-colored carpet where strands of many hues and shades make up an enchanting pattern.

But the lines of division of the classes of the Agada are there, though not entirely separable. We can, therefore, divide the Agada into two main divisions, (*1*) general, and (*2*) homiletic. The general Agada is to be further subdivided into (*a*) ethical-religious and (*b*) historical.

53. ETHICAL-RELIGIOUS AGADA

The ethical Agada contains a variety of subjects. It includes not only ethics proper, namely, the teaching of conduct, but also that of extreme piety permeated with deep religious feeling bearing upon the relations between man and God, and embraces at times subjects of a metaphysical nature. Besides, it teaches also wisdom, both theoretical and practical, such as manners as well as observations on ordinary affairs of life culled from daily experience. As such, it appears under two aspects,[6] (*1*) as a general philosophy of life, on the one hand, and (*2*) as primarily instructive on the other.

The style of this kind of Agada is at times flowery and poetic, but on the whole, it made extensive use of the half-poetic "Mashal" which includes the epigram, elegant sentence maxim, and sometimes the pointed proverb, or the fable and parable. This form of expression suited its purpose best, as it made its teaching not only more intelligible by the use of the simile or antithesis, but also more easily remembered on account of its brevity and other mnemonic devices. In search for the perfection of this form, the Agadists ransacked the treasures of the Bible, popular collections of proverbs and sayings, and have also drawn upon the literature of other nations with whom the Jews came into contact, so that as a result, the Agada both enriched the Jewish spirit and the form of expression of the Hebrew language, as well as that of the Aramaic vernacular.

Of this ethical-religious Agada, we possess a number of collections of early times, probably the remnants of a much larger literature. To this belongs first of all the Apocryphal book of the Proverbs of Sirach which as we have seen (supra Ch. I) was written in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic. There is another collection of proverbs and maxims known as the Alpha-Beth of Ben Sira containing ethical sayings and maxims written in Aramaic. It has little relation with the original Sirach book but is a much later collection. There are a few more books of a similar nature which are preserved in whole or in part. There was also, in former times an extensive collection of ethical maxims often quoted in the Mishnah under the name of a secret scroll (Megillath Setorim). But the finest example of this Agada is the treatise of the Sayings of the Fathers (Pirke Aboth) incorporated in the Mishnah. This treatise contains the ethical and religious teaching of the sages of Israel in chronological order (see infra sect. 56). The book has also a supplementary treatise known as Aboth Di Rabbi Nathan, i. e. the additional ethical teaching of the Fathers collected by Rabbi Nathan, an older contemporary of Judah, the Prince. Later, more collections of such type were added, but they belong to the subsequent period. There were also collections of fables and parables. We are told that Rabbi Meir, the compiler of the earlier Mishnah, possessed a collection of three hundred fables. There are also mentioned other collections, such as Fox's Fables and Fables of Kubsin, which some take to be the name of a man Kubyses, a Lybian fabulist, whose fables were translated.[7] These collections were lost, but their content was not lost altogether as we find hundreds of fables, parables, ethical maxims, and proverbs scattered throughout the numerous books of the great Agadic collections, as well as the Agadic part of the Talmudic literature, and many of them are interwoven with Halakah. All these forms of teaching go to make up the ethical-religious Agada.

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[6] On this subject, see Steinschneider, Jewish Literature Heb. Translation, p. 56 seq.

54. HISTORICAL AGADA

Historical Agada embraces embellishments both of the lives of the leading Biblical personages and of episodes of Biblical and later times, records of persecutions and miraculous redemptions, national and individual, as well as genealogies of persons and families and many other subjects. Much of this Agada contains historical facts which have to be extracted from the mass of extraneous matter. This kind of Agada swelled and increased as time went on. The complex Jewish life supplied it with sufficient material, the persecutions, the lives of the martyrs, the activity of the great sages, all these gave the impetus for fresh Agadic productions. This class of Agada is intimately connected with the homiletic and interpretative class, as the episodes, incidents, and stories were interwoven in the sermons, and are scattered in Talmudic literature and the great Agadic collections. But there seemed to have been a number of special collections as we are frequently told in the Talmud of rolls of genealogy (Megillath Yuchasin) where besides genealogical material proper, there were also some characterizations of the men mentioned there, and undoubtedly there were more books of a different nature. Much of this kind of Agada, especially that pertaining to the Biblical period, was left to us in the apocalyptic books, as it was indicated before. Of special collections of such kind, we possess two; the first is *The Roll of Fasts and Feasts* (Megillath Taanit), an early Taanaitic record of special days celebrated as minor feast days and of special fast days, commemorating certain events in later Jewish history, both joyful and sad. The second one is called the Order of the World (Seder Olam), the authorship of which is ascribed to Jose ben Halafta, the disciple of Rabbi Akiba. It is a historical record of events from the creation of the world to his time (see Ch. IV for more details).

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[7] Joseph Jacobs, in his introduction to Æsop's Fables.

55. *HOMILETIC AGADA*

The homiletic interpretative Agada constitutes the bulk of Agada. Its main characteristic is that it primarily turns around the Bible. In it, either verses or passages are actually explained or short sermons where many ideas are brought together are grouped and joined to a verse or several verses, the joining being at times logical, and at times forced. In such cases where the prime concern was the unfolding of a certain thought, or what is more probable the forcing of the thought the sermonizer had in mind, into the verse, the methods of interpretation were greatly diversified. Besides adapting the rules used in the Halakic Midrash, which for Agadic purposes were enlarged into thirty-two, the Agadists or preachers also employed other means such as Notarikon, namely, taking the single letters of a certain word as initials of words, thus forming a whole sentence out of one word, Gematrio, i. e. using the letters of words as representing sums, and compare them with the sums of the letters of other words, or other devices.

This kind of Agada reflects Jewish life closely, for it ministered to its needs. It was the weekly teaching in the synagogue, and as such, it was supposed to give comments on the current life, whether it was one of misery, or struggle, or peacefulness. As life became complex, so did Agada become complex, and gradually drew in all other elements. It embellished history, it told stories about the great men of all times, it inculcated ethics and religious truths, and sometimes taught laws. In most cases, the preacher was also the great master of Halakah, and he interpreted the verse in both ways, as legal and as spiritual teaching. The sermon often began with a question of Halakah, and then Agadic explanation followed. Hence, we find Agada very often interspersed with Halakic discussions.

As the preaching was usually on Sabbath afternoon, and as the afternoon service contained besides a reading from the Pentateuch also a portion from the hagiographa, just as the morning service contained also a reading from the prophets, the verses used in the sermon were drawn from all the three weekly readings. In time, these homilies began to be collected into books arranged in the order of the books of the Bible, but the actual compilation of these books belong to a later period which will be discussed in its proper place. It seems that the writing down of the Agada began much earlier than that of the Mishnah and Talmud. Agadic books were circulated in early times, and out of these collections, the later larger collection known generally as Midrashim, i. e. interpretative sermons (see Sect. 84) were made. About the time of the redaction of the Mishnah or immediately after, the nucleus of the first great Midrash on Genesis (Genesis, or Bereshith, Rabba) was already in existence, though in its present form it was not completed till a few centuries later. Likewise, there were included many Agadic passages in the Mishnah and also in the Halakic Midrashim to the other books of the Pentateuch (see above Sect. 41) the first compilation of which emanated from the schools of Rabbis Ismael and Akiba. Thus, the two great currents of Jewish teaching began to be organized about the same time into form and shape, only with this difference, that while Halakah obtained in the Mishnah the more complete definiteness of a text, Agada, on account of its very fluxity still remained in a comparatively flowing form until later. And even then, no one undertook to compile a text of the Agada. There are many collections but not a text, for it is essentially a spiritual production and there are no bounds to the spirit.

58. TOSEFTA

As the Sayings of the Fathers is the most important collection of the ethical Agada, it deserves a few words for the description of its character. As stated, it is a collection of proverbs bearing on moral conduct of the individual as well as that of society, and touches also on religious questions, and inculcates views accepted by the authorities. It was intended to supplement the Mishnah which deals mainly with law with a more or less coordinated view of Jewish ethics, namely, that kind of ethics practiced by the fathers of the Jewish tradition.

The collection retains a certain chronological order, giving these sayings in the order of time when the pronouncers of these lived. There are however, some irregularities in the chronology, which are undoubtedly due to a later arrangement. The tractate was placed in the order of Nezikin, damages, in accordance with a very apt remark in the Talmud, that one who wants to be a Hasid, pious man, some say, let him study Nezikin, and some say, let him study Aboth. In the first instance it means to study the Law and know how to avoid damaging or harming anyone. In the other, it advises the study of Aboth, and man will know the principles of conduct, so that he will carry out the law spontaneously.

The first four chapters contain the sayings of the great scholars beginning with the men of the great synagogue and ending with Judah, the Prince, his children and their contemporaries. The fifth chapter consists mainly of anonymous statements, and the greater part of them are number maxims. The use of number in proverbs, sayings, and maxims was a well-known device with all Semites as it is very helpful to memory. It is found in the book of Amos, the Proverbs of Solomon, and Sirach, and also in Arabic collections of proverbs. The numbers preferred in this chapter are 10, 7, 4. In general, the teaching of Aboth can be divided into two main divisions (*1*) those relating to Torah and religious principles, and (2) those concerning the conduct of the individual and society. The second one embraces (*a*) rules of conduct for the scholar, (*b*) for the relation between pupil and teacher, (*c*) of man towards man, (*d*) of justice and its administration. The sixth chapter added later is entirely devoted to the Torah, its love, value, and methods of acquisition.

57. THE AGADA AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

A word should be said finally about the place the Jewish people and its destinies occupy in the Agada. The Agada expatiates on the virtues of the Jewish people. It magnifies the idea of a chosen people, relates with great embellishments certain episodes in Jewish history, thus showing how the hand of God is manifested in it from its beginning, and inculcates innumerable times the idea that God has not forsaken Israel even in exile. The question of the suffering of the people occupies a prominent place. It was explained to be both a chastisement for sins, and a means for future reward. And above all, the Agada devoted itself to Messianic times. It pictured those times with the glowing and rich colors of Oriental phantasy. The Messiah became an ideal figure. His coming was described extensively and minutely. Whole collections are devoted to that end, where the sufferings that will be sustained before the redemption arrives are described, and the glorious time painted in grotesque manner. In the description of the Messianic time, the material and the spiritual are mixed.

The Agada was the well of living waters whence the Jew in exile drank thirstily and drew inspiration and comfort in his bitter struggle. In it, he found shelter from the persecutions and insults heaped upon him by his neighbors. Borrowing a simile from Heine, we can say that it is thanks to the Agada which fortified the Jew in his miserable life and whispered to him words of comfort reminding him of his former dignity and future splendor, that the "enchanted prince" preserved inwardly his princely dignity while forced to live the life of a dog externally. In the Agada, the Jewish child found ample room for the play of his imagination, and in it he satisfied his poetic craving, so that the poetic feeling of the singer of the Psalms was kept alive in Israel, and in time it bore fruit.

E. Additions to the Mishnah

58. TOSEFTA

Such a grandiose work as standardizing the great mass of Halakoth could not have been, by its very nature, complete and all-embracing. Since it was primarily a process of sifting, it was necessary that many Halakoth should be left out. Also because it was the intention of the compiler to have the Mishnah as a textbook, brevity was a desired thing. On that account, not only were many Halakoth left out, but the shorter versions of statements were preferred to the longer ones though the latter were more explicit. But those statements were not entirely forgotten. Yet, in early times, when the first compilations of the Mishnah was made by Rabbi Akiba, we find that one of his disciples, Rabbi Nehemiah, was collecting Toseftoth, i. e. additions.

This collection most likely was more or less limited to the longer versions of the same Halakoth incorporated in the Mishnah. In this case the earliest forms of the Tosefta were commentaries on the groups of Mishnoth collected in the standard Mishnah. But when the Mishnah was ultimately redacted by Judah, the Prince, there were many of his disciples and contemporaries, such as Levi, Bar Kapora, Rabbi Hiyya, and Rabbi Hoshaya who busied themselves with compilations of Halakoth which included many of the statements omitted altogether. These collections were at times known as the great Mishnaioth. Especially active in this work were Rabbis Hiyya and Hoshaya, and it is probably to them and their schools that we owe the collected additions to the Mishnah known as Tosefta. It is arranged accordingly in the same six orders of the Mishnah, divided into tractates, chapters, and paragraphs. It consists of two elements, entirely new material which was excluded altogether, and elucidation of the statements of the Mishnah either by giving additional matter upon the subjects merely referred to there, or assigning the reasons for the pronounced opinions in the Mishnaic statements.

The Tosefta we have now, though, seemed to have received its final form much later, probably at the close of the Talmud, as we find there many later additions. But there is no doubt that the last compiler, whoever he was, took as his basis the Tosefta collections of the school of Rabbis Hiyya and Hoshaya. The Tosefta contains also many Agadic statements which are either enlargements upon those quoted in the Mishnah or new ones. And just as the Mishnah contains an entirely Agadic treatise, so does the Tosefta, and this is the Aboth of Rabbi Nathan which is a scholium of the Sayings of the Fathers, where each brief saying or proverb is magnified and commented upon.

59. BARAITHOTH

Even the Tosefta does not include the entire material. There was still a great mass of Halakic statements the collections of which were not preserved, but their material is preserved to a larger extent in the *Gemarah,* the great commentary on the Mishnah. There are hundreds of such statements scattered there and are known as Baraithoth, (sing. Baraitha) namely, external, that is not of Mishnaic origin. They come, as said, from lost collections, or from groups of such statements which were committed to memory by generations of scholars.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER FORMS OF LITERATURE

HELLENISTIC LITERATURE

60. GENERAL REMARKS

In a previous chapter, we had occasion to refer to the great Jewish literary and cultural center, Alexandria, the *nervus vivendi* of the entire diaspora in the Hellenistic world. But while there we discussed only one phase of the literary activity emanating from that center, we wish now to complete that picture, and survey the entire spiritual heritage left to us by the savants and the literati of Egyptian Jewry who were, during three or four centuries, the mouthpieces of all intelligent Jews in the Græco-Roman Diaspora.

There is a peculiar tone and character to this literature, the like of which is hardly found anywhere else. It bears the impress of two world views on its face, views opposite and harmonious at the same time. In it a wonderful amalgam between Judaism and Hellenism was effected, and as a whole, it is a testimony to the remarkable power of the Jew to penetrate into the spirit and culture of other nations, sound their depths, enrich them with his contributions, without at the same time losing his identity and spiritual aloofness. Yet, with all the inner richness it may possess, as a product of two cultures, it is nevertheless stunted in its growth and limited in its extent, for it bore upon it the stamp as being the conscious expression of a minority, and a disliked minority, to say the least, at that.

Many were the Jewish communities scattered through those parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe which together constituted the Hellenistic world, and some of them even attained power, wealth, and influence. Yet, on the whole, the life of the Jews in those communities was a life of struggle, not so much a physical struggle for existence as a spiritual struggle for self-preservation. This struggle gave rise to a two-phased literary expression; on the one hand, as an attempt to defend the Judaism these dispersed Jews possessed from the constant encroachment of

Greek culture and influence for the benefit of the weaklings in Jewish ranks, and on the other hand, as a means to protect it from the attacks of malice and calumny from without.

Hellenism, that powerful civilizing agent which succeeded in casting its spell, in a comparatively short time, upon a motley of nations differing in race, language, religion, and culture, and weld them into a uniform mass, had not left the Jews within its sphere of influence untouched. It did not take long and the scattered Jewish communities in the Hellenistic Diaspora began to be Hellenized. Greek ideas, culture, and manners became part and parcel of the life of these Jews, and above all, the Greek language became their medium of speech. It was then that the inner struggle began; to maintain Judaism in the face of a changed environment—a problem not unknown in our days. As all struggles of a minority, it was carried on on lines of compromise and adjustment. It was not a question of the exclusion of the ideas of the more powerful culture, but of inclusion, namely, how to include the best that there is in that culture in Judaism, without at the same time injuring the tenets and principles of the latter. The result was, of course, a modification of both.

Zealously and diligently went on the struggle to maintain the integrity of Judaism within the ranks, and with equal zeal and vigor was simultaneously carried on the defense of Judaism from attacks of the outside world. The latter was as necessary and as important as the first phase of the struggle, for in fact, they complemented each other. The more the honor and the dignity of Judaism was vindicated, the easier it was for the Jews to uphold and maintain it. The position of the Jews in the Diaspora was far from an enviable one. As much as the Jew adapted himself to the mode of life of his neighbors, there remained in him enough of the aloofness and distinctness to make him totally different from the surrounding world. It was this aloofness which irritated the other nations, the fact that the Jews denied the right to other religions to exist, that they considered themselves a chosen people, the abstractedness of their religion, all these taken together made them an object of hatred and even of contempt. They were considered a dissonance in an otherwise harmonious world, and as such, they were attacked on all sides. The educated and the literati considered it their duty to denounce the Jews and their faith; they called them either atheists, namely, disbelievers in any kind of organized religion, or barbarously superstitious. Fables were invented about the peculiar superstitions practiced by them both in the Diaspora and in the Temple at Jerusalem. Similar fables were spread against their descent and history; the nation as a whole was declared to have no culture of its own, and as one which contributed little to general civilization. Such and similar slanders were circulated by the educated of all Hellenized peoples, whether Greeks, or Egyptians, or Syrians, but more than in all countries, Jew baiting was especially popular in Alexandria.

It was no wonder then, that Jews there developed a vigorous literary activity of an apologetic nature. In this literature, the Jewish writers endeavor to show the greatness of their faith, its purity and loftiness, and more, they endeavor to prove that the ideas embodied there are the very same ideas preached by Greek philosophers, that the Jewish nation is of great antiquity and that its great men, especially Moses, the Lawgiver, instructed other peoples. At times, of course, the writers passed from defense to offense, attacking the beliefs of the pagans (see Ch. I), but behind the seemingly offensive attitude, there really lurks the desire to defend and vindicate Judaism by declaring the inferiority of other cultures.

Thus, out of this double spiritual struggle, there arose an extensive literature permeated with the tendency of an attempt at adjustment on one hand, and that of apologetics on the other. And these characteristics are evident in all its expressions, they stunted its free development and curtailed its extent. In general, we note in it two main currents, that of Biblical exegesis and theology, and the historical-philosophical, both of which together served the double purpose of the struggle, to accomplish the harmonization of Judaism with Greek culture, as well as to defend it in the eyes of the great world. Here and there, others forms of literature are employed, but always with the same tendency. Of course, the means used by the writers to accomplish their purpose were not always honorable, spurious names were employed, as well as other literary forgeries, but after all, these were only war measures, and in war, especially that of defense, many things are permitted.

A. Bible Translation and Exegesis

61. THE SEPTUAGINT

The beginning of this Jewish Hellenistic literature must be traced to the translation of the Bible, known as the Septuagint. It arose both as the fulfilling of a need of the Egyptian Jews for a version of the Bible in Greek, since Hebrew was no more understood by the majority of the people, and also from a desire to show the nations the beauty of the Torah. Later history, however, invested the act of translation with a halo of wonder and miracle. A subsequent Hellenist writer in a book entitled the *Letter of Aristeas* (see infra Sect. 65) tells the story in profuse detail. According to him, King Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–247 B. C. E.) was advised by his librarian Demetrius Phalerus to have the laws of the Jews translated for his library. The king accordingly sends a request to the high priest, Eliezer, at Jerusalem, to send him suitable translators. The latter sent him seventy-two elders versed both in Hebrew and Greek, and when they arrived in Egypt, they were received with honors and placed in seventy-two different apartments, and each one completed a translation. When the translations were compared, they were found to be exactly alike.

This story was accepted as truth for many generations, hence the name of that translation Septuagint, i. e. the translation of the seventy, as the two additional men were only the leaders of the delegation, and were not included in the number. But modern scholarship has proven almost conclusively that this account is mere fiction, the only true fact which remains is the time of the translation of the Pentateuch, as the story relates only to that part of the Bible, namely, that it was translated during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus about the middle of the 3rd century B. C. E.

The translation, as said, was done by the Jews themselves to fill a most pressing need, and most likely, their best men participated in this work, and it might have taken a number of years. After the Pentateuch was first translated, the desire arose for the translation of the other books of the Bible which was gradually carried out in a number of years by different authors. We know, though, that in the year 132 B. C. E., all the prophetic books, including the historical and many of the hagiographa, were already translated, for the grandson of Sirach writing in that years tells us of their translation. By the beginning of the first century B. C. E., the entire Bible was translated. When the various translations were accomplished, they were gathered into one book, bearing one name, i. e. Septuagint, and were considered by the Jews of the Hellenic Diaspora as their text. The value of this translation for these Jews can not be overestimated. It was their Bible, it was the translation which was most likely read in their synagogues, it was the text quoted in their books, and it was the one which they commented upon and interpreted. In short, it was the corner-stone of their thought and philosophy.

The Septuagint was a great achievement, notwithstanding many of its defects the chief of which is its style. The Greek was Hebraized, and in many cases, the Hebrew construction was followed, and it was often difficult for a real Greek to understand its meaning. But its advantages outweigh its shortcomings. It is not a literal translation, but a commentary as well. A conscious effort is seen in it to harmonize the Torah with current ideas thus serving the purpose of reconciling Judaism with the culture of the day. Its chief characteristic, as in later translations, is the removal of anthropomorphic expressions concerning God, enhancing thereby the purity of the God conception. The translators were evidently scholars of the Law, and were conversant with the interpretation of the Bible as it was taught in Palestine, as they incorporated many Halakic and Agadic interpretation of verses. A number of other changes were obviously made to meet certain exigencies of the time. But there are many deviations in the translation from the Hebrew text which we possess and we cannot definitely know whether the translators actually had different readings in the text they possessed, or that these deviations are merely their own explanation of the words of the Bible. But be that as it may, this first translation still serves scholars as a guide for the interpretation of many a knotty passage in the Holy Scriptures.

62. *AQUILA'S AND THEODOTION'S BIBLE TRANSLATIONS*

As authoritative as the Septuagint was for the Jews of the Hellenic Diaspora, yet it could not be kept pure from interpolations and errors of the transcribers during the ages. Especially, these began to multiply from the time of the advance of Christianity. The Septuagint was the only Bible the gentile Christians knew, and in the heat of polemics against Judaism, the partisan Christians did not hesitate to manipulate their Bible in such a way as to prove their doctrines. As a result, the text became corrupt. Besides, a demand arose among the more pious elements of the Diaspora for a new translation which shall be more in harmony with the spirit of Judaism in its developed form, which it assumed in the beginning of the second century C. E. This demand was given the proper attention by the leaders of the school at Jamnia (Jabne) in Palestine, Rabbi Eliezer, son of Hyrcanus, and Joshua the son of Hananya, and Akiba, and soon a man was found to undertake the task.

That man was Aquila, a Jewish proselyte from Pontus. As a born Greek, he knew that language well, and as one who came to Palestine to sit at the feet of the great Akiba, he likewise mastered Hebrew. His translation received the sanction of the great Palestinian Rabbis, Eliezer and Joshua, the disciples of Johanan ben Zakkai, and it is even said to have been supervised by them. It is on the whole a very literal translation as its aim was to render every Hebrew detail into Greek. He took care, of course, to incorporate the interpretations of the rabbis, and endeavored to avoid every possibility of such dubious rendering from which a meaning not agreeing with the adopted view of Judaism could be deduced. His masters, Eliezer and Joshua, praised the translation exceedingly, and applied to Aquila the words "Thou art the fairest of men, grace is poured upon thy lips" (Psalms XLV, 3) meaning by that that his translation possesses all the possible grace. Simon, the son of Gamaliel, the Patriarch, during the subsequent generation pronounced the dictum, that after due investigation it was found that the Torah can not be accurately translated in any other language except in Greek[1] referring, of course, to Aquila's translation. Numerous passages of the translation are quoted in the Talmud, and from other sources we know that it was widely used by the Jews in the Diaspora for centuries. Yet, it was not preserved wholly, only fragments are preserved in the writings of the Church Fathers who used Origen's (185–254 C. E.) Hexapla, i. e. a Bible in six versions, where Aquila's version was also given.

Another translation was made half a century later, about 200 C. E., by one named Theodotion who is also said to have been a Jewish proselyte, and likewise a native of Pontus. He, however, did not make a new translation but revised the Septuagint and brought it nearer to the Hebrew. His translation was likewise lost; only his translation of Daniel is preserved, as it was accepted by the Church, and hence incorporated in the manuscripts of the Septuagint, and has supplanted the older translation of that book.

63. EXEGESIS

The attempt of the translators of the Septuagint to comment on the Pentateuch as well as to translate, and especially their efforts to harmonize it with current ideas gave rise to a school of exegetes which carried the effort further. The more the intelligent Jew of the Diaspora became Hellenized, the stronger grew the need for a reconciliation between his Hellenic and Jewish selves. And as the Bible, chiefly the Pentateuch, was the center of his religion, for none, even the radical dared to doubt the Divine origin of the Torah, it was, of course, made the central point of the efforts of reconciliation, hence, the peculiar tendency of all exegetes and commentators. There were undoubtedly many such exegetes, unfortunately, however, their works were lost, but we possess almost the complete works of the greatest of them, and from their extent and copiousness, we can not only learn the exact nature and character of that kind of exegesis, but also infer that his work represents the fruition of a process long used in the schools.

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[1] Palestinian Talmud, tractate Megillah, Ch. I, Sect. II.

That great exegete is Philo Judaeus, the famous philosopher [2] (see Sect. 68). The chief characteristic of that kind of exegesis is the extensive use of the allegory. Allegory and the interpretation of the hidden meaning of words were really not limited to the Jews, for as Zunz remarked long ago, "That for several centuries, we meet wherever we turn, among Jews, Syrians, Greeks, and Christians, with allegory and Midrash in interpretation of sacred writings. Everywhere there was a concerted effort to draw out from the otherwise plain words the deep and secret meaning of the text hidden therein." [3] The underlying motive of this tendency was the desire to harmonize the sacred text with current philosophical ideas. Sometimes, it was used as a means of defense against those who attacked the sacred Scriptures on account of the literal meaning of some passages. It was then endeavored to interpret such passages allegorically, to show that they contained a hidden meaning which is a higher and more noble one than the mere literal explanation of the word would convey. But primarily, it came as a philosophic need for the interpreters themselves, who held the Scriptures in great respect, but were at the same time saturated with the philosophy of the time. It was thus with the Alexandrian Jews, and especially with Philo who was permeated with Greek culture. Such allegoristic interpretations were especially employed when the question of the character of God was concerned, namely, when the Bible described God or his actions in such a way which was repulsive to the philosophic conception.

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[2] Very little is left us concerning the life of this great man; only scattered remarks here and there. The year of his birth is not definitely known; it is variously placed between 30–20 B. C. E. He was a native of Alexandria and a descendant of a highly aristocratic family. His brother Alexander was the Alabarch, the head of the Jewish community of Alexandria, a high office indeed, as the number of Jews in that city reached close to a million. He was distinguished while still a youth by his zeal for study, as he says of himself, "that instead of crawling about after wealth and glory, I was carried aloft in inspiration by philosophy." It seems, though, that in spite of devotion to philosophy he took an active part in general Jewish life, for at the time of the attack on the Jews at Alexandria instigated by the Roman proconsul, Flaccus (38 C. E.), he headed a delegation of the Egyptian Jews to the mad Emperor, Cajus Caligula in 40 C. E. He was then an old man as he describes himself as such in his treatise "Legatione ad Gajum," the Embassy to Caius, which contains an account of his mission. He must have died a few years later.

[3] Gottesdienstliche Forträge, p. 41.

We have, for instance, Philo's interpretation of the passage in Genesis III, 8–11, where it is told that Adam and Eve hid from God, and that He asked Adam, "Where art thou?" that what it really meant here is the false conception of the wicked man who hides from the voice of reason. In such interpretation, Adam, of course, becomes a symbol, not the first ancestor. What forced him to turn the story into allegory is the difficulty which the text involved to a philosophic mind. For, how could one conceive that Adam and Eve could possibly hide from the all-seeing eye of God. Similarly, he interprets the whole story of the fall of man in an allegorical way. Adam and Eve represent the male and female types in the human species, and the serpent symbolizes evil desires and passions. The passage in Genesis XI, 5–9, where it is told that God descended to see the Tower of Babel which the people built and then destroyed it, is explained by Philo to be a warning to men that they should not pronounce judgment upon any act until they actually investigate it on the spot where it took place. It could not be taken by him literally, for God does not have to go down to investigate in order to know the truth. And thus, Philo goes on and allegorizes and interprets many passages in this wise, almost the entire Pentateuch. Even the very laws do not escape the fate of being allegorized, and are forced to yield a philosophic thought, as for instance, leaven which is forbidden on Passover (hometz) becomes a symbol for passion in man, and *matzo* stands for purity of soul.

This tendency contained an element of danger, for it led to an undervaluation of the Laws. Philo was not unconscious of it, and he very often insists that the precepts and commandments must be taken literally as well, and must be observed carefully in all detail. But that there were others who were not as scrupulous, and did sublimate the Law into ethical precepts and injunctions, is quite evident. Besides allegory, he used a good deal of Agada in his exegesis and especially in his treatises on the lives of great men. His Agadic interpretations resemble very much the Palestinian Agada. He also shows considerable acquaintance with Halakah as in many interpretations of the Law, he clearly reminds us of similar interpretations given in the Talmud. As it is hardly possible to assume that Philo was a pupil of the Palestinian scholars, we must, therefore, explain his extensive acquaintance with their teachings, either through the fact that these Halakic interpretations were widely current in Egypt and were the common share of intelligent Jews, or that Philo, in this case, drew from the commentaries of his predecessors. But his main object in explaining the Mosaic Law was to show its ethical and spiritual character. For this purpose, he endeavored to find an ethical meaning in every law, an intention to improve the state of human spirituality in every injunction, and the apologetic tendency is evident on every step. Thus, in explaining the purpose of the dietary laws, he claims that they do not intend to foster separateness, as the vilifiers of Judaism have asserted, but on the contrary, to teach self-control. In explaining the Sabbath with its injunction to cease from all kinds of work, he launches upon a long discourse, upon the esteem in which work is held by the Jews, in order to obviate the accusation which was usually made against the Jews by pagan writers that they despise work, and emphasizes innumerable times that the Sabbath is a day devoted to study and the ennobling of the spirit. The result of such masterful apologetics was that Judaism as a whole appeared in the eyes of intelligent unprejudiced gentiles as a highly ethical and spiritual religion. And it is possible that it is due to such exegetic works that the great proselytizing movement in the Roman Empire, during the first century C. E., took place. Thousands of Greeks in Alexandria, and Romans in Rome and elsewhere became either full or semi-converts to Judaism.

Philo's exegetical works are quite extensive, even though not all of them have been preserved, and can on the whole be divided into three classes: (*1*) A shorter commentary on the Pentateuch intended for popular use under the name of Questions and Answers, as it runs in that form. It is not certain whether it really covered the entire five books or only some of them. According to the testimony of Eusebeius (4th century), in his time they were only extant to Genesis and Exodus, in all, eleven books, six to the former and five to the latter. The Greek original was lost, and a large part of it, four books on Genesis and two on Exodus, was preserved only in Armenian of which a translation was made into Latin. (*2*) His chief work is the large allegorical commentary on Genesis. It begins with Chapter II and runs to the end of Chapter XL. It is very voluminous and is divided into sixteen treatises which are in turn subdivided into books. Most of the treatises bear special titles according to the subject they treat, such as the Cherubim and the Flaming Sword (De Cherubim et Flammeo Gladio), dealing with the passage in Genesis III, 24; IV, 1, or, that God is immutable (Quod Deus sit immutabilis), explaining the passage Genesis VI, 4–12, where it is told that God regretted His act of creating man; a subject which required a lengthy discussion, for how could we apply regret to God since He is not susceptible to change? Other titles are: On Intoxication (De Ebritate), referring to Noah's intoxication, Genesis IX, 21; On Sobriety, Ibid., 24; On The Value of Temperance; On The Migration of Abraham (De Migratione Abrahami) to Genesis XII, 1–6, and many more subjects. These treatises are more than commentaries to the verses, but discourses on subjects where philosophy, ethics, and kindred teachings are imparted. (*3*) The third class of Philo's exegetic works is what can be called an outline of the Mosaic Legislation. It comprises a group of works covering the various divisions of laws arranged in systematic order. It was primarily intended for non-Jews. To this class belong the treatises: On The Creation of the World (De Mundi Opificio); On The Life of Abraham, a philosophical treatise on the teaching of virtue, as Abraham typifies instructive virtue; On Political Life, or On Joseph. He, then, turns to the Legislation proper and begins with the treatise On The Decalogue (De Decalogo) giving a general statement of its character and division. This is followed by the main treatise of this class On The Special Laws (De Specialibus Legibus). This is a most praiseworthy work as in it Philo tries to arrange systematically almost all Mosaic Laws under the heads of the Ten Commandments. For instance, under the first two Commandments, he brings in all the laws connected with the worship of God, such as those concerning priests and sacrifices; under that of the Sabbath, all laws dealing with the day of rest and all festivals; under the seventh Commandment (prohibition of adultery) all laws bearing on marriage and divorce; under the other three, prohibition of murder (Philo changes the order of the Commandments), stealing and lusting, all civil and criminal laws. In addition to these, he also wrote a treatise on the three virtues: Fortitude, Charity, and Repentance, and one on Reward and Punishment (De Praemiis et poenis). These treatises are a sort of appendices to the main work on special laws, and include also such laws which could not be grouped under the ten categories. In all these works, there is contained besides exegesis also philosophy and ethics. He wrote some other treatises, such as On the Life of Moses, and several historical books; these as well as his philosophy will concern us in the next section.

B. History, Poetry and Philosophy

64. THE HISTORICAL WORK OF DEMETRIUS EUPOLEMUS AND ARTAPANUS

The two tendencies characterizing the entire Hellenistic Jewish literature, that of harmonizing Judaism with Greek culture and the apologetic one, which were discussed above, are especially in evidence in historical philosophical literature. One of the oft-repeated slurs against the Jews was, as we have seen, their lack of a history of their past; they were said to be a people without a culture of their own since they have no records of that culture. To repel that charge, Jewish writers began to compile histories of their people wherein, of course, the deeds of the past were greatly glorified. The first historical work of this kind, fragments of which we still possess, was one written by a writer named Demetrius, who lived in Alexandria towards the close of the third century B. C. E. The title of this work was "Concerning the Kings in Judea." It did not, however, busy itself with the lives of the kings but seems primarily to have been a detailed work on chronology in Jewish history. It started with reciting briefly the early history of the Patriarchs, giving special attention to dates and continued to the time of Ptolemy IV (222–205 B. C. E.), which was most likely the time of the author. The book, as evidenced from the fragments, bristled with painstaking details about the genealogy of the leaders of Israel, and the author, in supplying all those details in both chronology and genealogy, must have drawn upon other sources besides the Bible, possibly oral Agadic elements which later found their way in the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic books.

The next historian of whose work also some fragments are preserved, as usual, in the writings of Eusebeius and other Church Fathers and is also mentioned by Josephus (Against Apion I, 23), is one by the name of Eupolemus. His work is mentioned under several titles but the most probable one is "The Jewish Kings," though a work on The Prophecy of Elijah is also ascribed to him. He really endeavored to give a narrative of Jewish history from early times, and the apologetic tendency is quite in evidence as he embellishes the lives of all the Jewish heroes with great splendor. In a preserved fragment about Moses, he makes him the inventor of alphabetical writing, transmitting it to the Jews, and they to the Phœnicians, and they in turn to the Greeks. Another lengthy fragment gives the chronology from Moses to David and tells at length the life story of the latter as well as that of Solomon. He also gives the correspondence between Solomon and the kings, Hiram and Uaphres of Tyre and Egypt, respectively, wherein he solicits their aid in building the Temple. He likewise gives a detailed description of the Temple. The reproduction of the letters of Solomon already shows the strong tendency towards the pseudoepigraphy, namely, of ascribing writings to persons of antiquity in order to give them more authenticity.

The date of Eupolemus is not certain. He does mention a king, Demetrius, who is supposed to be Demetrius I, King of Syria, in the years 162–150 B. C. E., and he most likely lived at that time. Besides, he is identified with a certain Eupolemus mentioned in I Maccabees Ch. VIII, 17, as one of the ambassadors of Judah Maccabee to Rome. If this is correct, he was then a Palestinian and not an Alexandrian. This is strengthened by evidence from his writings that he used besides the Septuagint translation also the Hebrew Bible.

Another work of which we possess some fragments is one which bore the title "About the Jews" by an author named Artapanus. This work exhibits a propagandistic tendency inasmuch as he makes Abraham, Joseph, and Moses the instructors of the Egyptians and founders of their culture. To the last-named, especially, is attributed the inventions of navigation, architecture, military science, even the very institution of the Egyptian religion. To such degree has apologetics attained that it would even allow Moses to prescribe the rites of Apis in order to prove the indebtedness of the Egyptians to the Jews.

65. CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

We have thus far dealt with historical writings aimed chiefly to glorify the past of their people, but there were a host of others who devoted themselves to the history of their nation in their own time, writing for the purpose of showing the world the achievements of the Jews, either covering whole epochs or single episodes of special importance. To this group belongs, first of all, the work of Jason of Cyrene on the Maccabean wars in five books, of which our II Maccabees is an abridgment. As this book is lost, we can not judge of its character except from the abridgment which was already discussed. As for its date, it must have been written not long after the events took place which would be about 150 B. C. E., at any rate, not much later. (See Ch. I, Sect. 6.) Another work is one which bore the name of a famous Greek historian, Hecateus of Abdera, a contemporary of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy Lagos, but which was written by a Jew. This was the usual device adopted by apologists. Hecateus's work on the Jews is quoted by Josephus, and many fragments of it are still preserved. It dealt probably also with ancient Jewish history, but more with the relations of the Jews to Alexander and Ptolemy I, and described the privileges conferred by these monarchs upon them. Its whole character was of a defensive nature and the virtues of the Jews were extolled. Josephus relates in the name of Hecateus a fine story concerning a Jew Messollam (Meshullam) who acted as a guide to a party of Greek soldiers on a march towards the Red Sea. When the party stopped at the behest of an augur who was endeavoring to foretell the success of the march by the flight of a bird, which was then circling above their heads, Mesollam inquired for the cause of the delay in the march. On being told the reason, he silently drew his bow and hit the bird, and when chided for his sacrilegious act, he calmly remarked, "How could you expect the bird to foretell our future success when it did not even know its own fate?" (Against Apion B. II, 22.) The date of this interesting work is variously determined, some place it about 200 B. C. E. and some in the beginning of the first century B. C. E.

The famous letter of Aristeas also belongs to that class. Like the Pseudo-Hecateus, it was also ascribed to a Greek writer and deals with the episode of the translation of the Bible into Greek. Aristeas, an official at the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–247 B. C. E.), writes to his brother Philocrates and tells him, in detail, the wonderful manner in which the translation was accomplished, as it was related above (Sect. 59). It is evident, though, that the story of the translation was only a means for the telling of the great esteem the Greek kings had for the Jewish law and its teachings. The greatest part of the book is devoted to describing the wise answers of the translators to the questions propounded by the king and his counselors. The whole story is given great authenticity by making the writer, i. e. Aristeas, not only an eye-witness but the very ambassador of the king to the high priest, Eliezer, to bring the translators into Egypt. In general, the book breathes love and admiration for Jews and Judaism and is thus one of the cleverest pieces of apologetics ever written. For centuries, the genuineness of the book was not doubted, and as stated, the very name Septuagint was given to the Greek translation of the Bible on its account. But modern research has discovered its real nature and it is a foregone conclusion that the book was written by a Jew much later than the actual translation took place. As for its date, it is usually placed between 200–96 B. C. E.

The most sober piece of contemporary Jewish history was written by Philo Judæus. It originally contained five books and described in detail the persecutions of the Jews in Alexandria under the procurators, Sejanus, in the time of Tiberius, and Flaccus, in the time of Caligula, and also his embassy to Caligula in the year 40 B. C. E. We, however, possess only two books, "Against Flaccus" and "The Embassy to Caius." In both works, Philo describes vividly the events of his day, and describes at length his sad mission to Rome. It serves as a real historical source for the history of the time.

66. HISTORICAL POETRY

The desire of the Hellenist Jewish writers to tell the glories and greatness of their people and, of course, to impart instruction to their own brethren was not limited to historical prose but also found expression in poetry. They used for that purpose the most common forms then in vogue in Greek literature, epic poetry and the drama, and on the whole historical poetry is the most appropriate term for this literature as it deals primarily with past deeds.

This kind of poety must have been very extensive, but not much of it has been preserved. A number of fragments from a larger epic "On Jerusalem" by a certain poet, Philo, are quoted by Eusebeius. The first one deals with Abraham, the second with Joseph, and the third is a description of the springs and the water pipes of Jerusalem where the abundance of water in the Holy City is extolled.

Another fragment of a similar epic is from one "On Sichem" (Schechem) by one Theodotus. It was devoted to the geography and history of that town. Its topography is first described with a certain enthusiasm, and then the entire history of Jacob and his settlement in that city, his alliance with Hamor, the ravaging of Dinah, and the attack of Simeon and Levi are described at length. From the fact that Sichem is made the subject of the poem and that it is called the Holy City, it can be inferred that Theodotus was a Samaritan to whom Sichem, where the Samaritan Temple stood, was the Holy City instead of Jerusalem.

The most remarkable piece of historical Jewish poetry written in Greek is a historical drama by the name of *Exodus* by a dramatist Ezekiel. He is called by several writers, "The Poet of Jewish Tragedies," and he must have written a number of them. In the extracts of Exodus preserved for us, the action begins with the flight of Moses to *Midion,* and opens with a monologue of Moses where he tells his life story up to that point. His meeting with the daughters of Jethro is then described, followed by the scene of the burning bush in which only God's voice is heard but He is not made to appear on the stage. In other scenes, an Egyptian who escaped drowning in the Red Sea enters and tells the sad tale, a messenger arrives and tells Moses of the discovery of an excellent place of encampment at Elim. Thus, the entire story of Exodus is dramatized with skill and talent. The date of its composition is about 150 B. C. E.

In addition to what was mentioned, there are a number of historical writings by anonymous writers as well as excerpts of Jewish Greek poetry which were interpolated by their writers into the writings of famous Greek poets such as Æschylus, Sophocles, and many more wherein the worship of the one true God is extolled and the Jews praised. All this was the work of Jewish propogandists who used all means to glorify the Jewish name.

67. *JOSEPHUS AND HIS HISTORY*

The greatest Jewish historian of that period who gave us a consecutive and complete history of the Jewish people covering a period of over 2000 years was Joseph ben Matthyohu, or Matthias Hakohen, i. e. a priest, or as he is otherwise known, Josephus Flavius. His life was a very checkered one, and the course of his activity is full of deviations and extreme meanderings. He was born in the year 37 C. E. in Jerusalem to a father who descended from a very noble priestly family. As he tells us himself in his "Life," he was exceptionally proficient in the study of the Law, and while a youth, he evinced a desire to acquaint himself with Jewish parties. At first, he associated himself with an Essene, Banus, and for three years, he led an ascetic life, but at the age of nineteen, he returned to Jerusalem and joined the Pharisees. At twenty-six, he went to Rome on a mission of rescuing some imprisoned priests, and there he made the acquaintance of Queen Poppea, wife of Nero, who was sympathetic to Judaism. In Rome he learned both to fear and respect the Roman power and culture, and his weak nature became greatly impressed with the pomp and power of the Roman Empire. On returning to Jerusalem in the year 66 C. E., he found Judea in a state of seething rebellion, and of course, he tried, together with the other peace-loving leaders, to persuade the Jews to submit to the Roman power. His efforts were unsuccessful, and he, either for fear lest he be considered an enemy, or for some other reason, became active in the rebellion. His activity in the war was, to say the least, of a curious character. He himself tells, that he with two other priests were sent by the Sanhedrin to Galilee to persuade the people to lay down their arms. How came it then, that when he arrived there, he set about to govern the province and organize an army to fight the Romans? His unfortunate campaign in Galilee, as well as the charge often made against him that the speedy fall of the province was mainly due to his double dealing, are too well known to need any comment. After his surrender in 67, he became, on account of his prophecy that Vespasian will become emperor, the favorite of the general. When the prophecy was fulfilled, favors were showered upon Josephus and he was allowed to adopt the Emperor's family name, Flavius. He accompanied Titus to Jerusalem, stayed at the Roman camp till the fall, and afterwards settled in Rome. There he was a court favorite through the reign of three emperors, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, received a literary pension, and was granted full Roman citizenship. At Rome, he devoted himself to literary work of which his history is a result, and he thus partly atoned for his unpatriotic conduct as a general in the Jewish war of liberation. The year of his death is not known with certainty. It is generally placed at 95 C. E., though some believe that he lived until the beginning of the second century.

His historical works consist of (*1*) *The Wars of the Jews,* in seven books, (2) *Jewish Antiquities,* in twenty books, (*3*) *The Life*. This work, though supposed to be an autobiography, dwells little on his life proper but is devoted to a detailed survey of the war in Galilee, and justifies his conduct in its management. His other work entitled *Against Apion* in two books is an apology for Jews and Judaism, and as will be seen constitutes his chief merit as a literary champion of his people.

The Wars of the Jews were, as Josephus states in his preface, first written in Aramaic, his native tongue, for the benefit of those whom he calls "The Upper Barbarians," who are most likely the Jews of Babylonia, with the purpose, as it is surmised, to restrain them from instigating a revolt in the border provinces of the Roman Empire by convincing them of the power of Rome. Later, towards the end of the reign of Vespasian about the years 75–79 C. E., he translated the work with the help of some of the Greek scholars into Greek. Yet, though it is supposed to be a translation, it can be no doubt that the first version was more favorable to the Jews, for the second version of this history bore the character of an official history of the Jewish War sanctioned by the very people who conquered the Jews, as it bore testimonies of accuracy by Vespasian, Titus, and for the sake of appearance also by the Jewish king, Aggrippa II, who was more Roman than Jew.

It is true, that Josephus in his preface tells us that the main motive which actuated him to write the history of the war was the fact that the other histories did not do justice to the Jews in their struggle against the Romans, either because of flattery to the latter, or hatred towards the former. He, therefore, proposes to give a true account of this war. And though a Jew, he intends to be fair to all sides. Yet, there is great doubt whether he really carried out his promise. He was fair enough to the Romans, but hardly to the Jews. And though he apologizes to his readers for the passion he may be under in describing these affairs, and begs them to allow him "to indulge in some lamentations upon the miseries undergone by my own country"; [4] he hardly displays that expected passion, and throughout the work bears the air of a scientific historian.

Of the seven books of *The Wars,* the first two are devoted to a survey of the events in Jewish history from the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes to the time of the rebellion, while the last five deal in detail with the story of the great war. At the time when Josephus wrote *The Wars,* he did not plan to write a history of the Jewish people, as he says in his preface, that he thinks such a task superfluous, for many Jews before him had done so, and also many Greeks had dealt with that subject. He, therefore, prefixed that survey of the period from Antiochus to the war merely as an introduction. He really covers it briefly with the exception of the reign of Herod which he tells at length. This is to be explained by the fact that Josephus was primarily a compiler and made extensive use of previous sources almost copying them verbatim.

The principal source for the history of the period preceding his time, which he used in *The Wars,* seems to have been the writings of Nicolas of Damascus, a Greek historian who was a great friend of Herod and an official at his court. It is no wonder then that he followed his source in describing the reign of that monarch in full detail. Besides Nicolas, he must have used also other sources, some of the writings of the Hellenist Jews which dealt with the Maccabean period. Where his sources fail him as in the period between Archilaus, the son of Herod, to the War (5–66 C. E.), he is brief and disjointed.

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[4] Preface to *The Wars,* Sect. 4.

In *The Wars of the Jews,* Josephus endeavors to appear in the character of a disinterested historian who has in mind only one object, to tell the truth. He is, of course, very anxious to defend himself and his patrons, Vespasian and Titus, and, except for that tendency, there is a spirit of aloofness pervading it. He gives, on the whole, a clear account of the war with a certain precision, but his history bears the character of a chronicle of events rather than a history of Jewish life. There is very little of the inner life pictured there. He gives a description of the three Jewish sects, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, which, however, is primarily limited to the last sect, inasmuch as the first two sects, the most important ones, are given only one or two paragraphs, a thing hardly to be expected from one who describes himself as a Pharisee and a learned priest. There is no mention of the great Jewish men of the period covered, such as Hillel and others. In addition, there are in *The Wars,* especially in the first two books dealing with the period antedating the war, a number of inaccuracies which are later corrected in *The Antiquities.* All this goes to show that Josephus followed his non-Jewish sources too closely. Even in the description of the war itself where he is supposed to write from personal notes,[5] there are many inaccurate interpretations of names of places in Judea, a thing almost unpardonable for a native of that land, a priest and leader of the Jews. This again proves that Josephus followed Roman sources, such as the Commentaries on the Jewish Wars of Vespasian which were placed at his disposal,[6] and others. Finally, he surprises us by the total absence of feeling for the miseries of his people, in spite of his assuring us that he lamented for them. The description of the triumphal march of Titus in Rome, and the execution of Simon bar Giora, the Jewish general,[7] does not betray any passion on the part of Josephus, on witnessing the final humiliation of his people, and the degrading death of a brave Jew who fought valiantly for the liberation of his country. This description could have been given by any Roman eye-witness and need not have been written by one who professes himself a Jewish patriot. Yet, with all these defects, Josephus's history of the war is the only complete account of this period which was left to us, and which managed to survive, and thus it became our only historical source.

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[5] Against Apion. B. 1, 9.

[6] Life, 65.

[7] Wars B. VII, Ch. V.

His large historical work, *The Antiquities of the Jews,* which forms a complete history of the Jews from the creation to the war, constitutes the chief glory of Josephus as a historian. It was written eighteen years after *The Wars* and published in 93 C. E. The motives for his writing the history he states to be the desire to benefit the public by telling them things which they did not know, and especially because of the great importance of the facts themselves.[8] He was urged to complete his task by his patron, Epaphroditus, a man of great nobility and a lover of knowledge. He proposes to follow the sacred records of the Jews which, as he says, contain a history of *five thousand* years.[9] He speaks in the usual language of exaggeration of his time, for the matter of following records is open to doubt, as will be evident.

The character of this Magnum Opus of Josephus is of a much higher nature than that of *The Wars.* The Jewish patriot in him appears quite often, and as a whole it bears an apologetic nature as he aims to show the world the glory of the Jews and the greatness of Judaism. Still, even here he pretends to keep up the appearance of a disinterested historian. For this work, he prepared himself more thoroughly than for the first. He used a great many sources, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, and he even quotes his sources by name, especially the non-Jewish. This is done, of course, to show the world how highly the Greeks thought of the Jews. Even *The Antiquities* are more in the nature of a chronicle than a real history of Jewish life, yet there is a better attempt to picture the inner relations.

In relating the events of the Biblical period, he follows the Bible pretty closely, but utilizes a great deal of Agada in embellishing the events, and here and there, there is an attempt to rationalize the miraculous happenings, but on the whole, he relates them as they are stated in the Bible. In one place, he states, "I have related the things as they are contained in the Holy Writ, but my readers may accept or reject the story as they please," [10] thus showing his disinterestedness. In giving a summary of the Mosaic Code, he recounts the laws generally in accordance with Halakic interpretations but there are quite a number of aberrations from the accepted Halakah.

With the close of the Biblical period, i. e. the restoration from Babylon and the resettlement in Palestine, Josephus was at a loss for sources. His account, therefore, of the two hundred odd years between the return from Babylon to the conquest of Alexander the Great is rather meager. He utilized, however, all Jewish sources, such as the Apocryphal book of I Ezra, additions to Esther and probably some chronicles of the High Priests, in order to add some details to the stories of Zerubbabel and Mordecai and to elucidate some events in that obscure period such as the killing of the High Priest, John, by his brother, an event which is also mentioned in the Talmud. But there is no mention of the inner life of that period, of the activity of the Sopherim and the Great Synagogue.

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[8] Preface, 2.

[9] Ibid. 3.

[10] Antiquities B. II, Ch. XVI, 5.

From the period of Alexander to that of the Maccabees where he had more sources, both Jewish—mostly Alexandrian—and Greek, his treatment is fuller. But from the Maccabees on where the sources grow abundant, his narrative is detailed. There he quotes in detail the Roman decrees concerning the Jews of the Diaspora and copies extensively from Greek historians, but also utilizes Jewish sources, especially the first Maccabees. Yet, though he tried to be faithful to his people, he was very often misled by his non-Jewish sources, which he followed closely from the time of the Maccabees. These sources were Strabo (30 C. E.), Nicolas of Damascus, especially the latter, and others. Thus, we see in one place when describing the Pharisees, he speaks of them, "as those who were in a capacity of greatly opposing kings," and further, "a cunning sect they were, and soon elevated to a pitch of open fighting and doing mischief." [11] Such language about the Pharisees does not tally with his other descriptions of them, and is evidently taken from the source of Nicolas of Damascus, as the passage occurs in the story of Herod whose historian he was. It proves conclusively that Josephus lacked the skill of a great historian who only uses his sources but does not incorporate them verbatim. The same defect noticeable in *The Wars* of omitting to mention the Great Jewish sages who had little to do with politics, is evident here too. Yet, with all its defects, the *Jewish Antiquities* is a great work, especially as it is the only reliable source we possess for the long period of Jewish history until the destruction of the Temple, and Josephus will remain the historian par excellence for that period.

His *Life* has been described as the least reliable of his historical works, having been intended primarily as an apology against his assailants, especially Justus of Tiberias who impeached his loyalty to the Romans. It thus represents a distortion of facts in his own favor, and in reality, it is an impeachment of his conduct as a Jewish patriot. Yet, it serves as a source for the details of the war in Galilee, and unfortunately the only source, for the other writings on the subject were lost. It was written towards the end of his life about 95 C. E. and served as an appendix to *The Antiquities*.

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[11] Antiquities, B. XVII, Ch. II, p. 4.

Of special merit is the last writing of Josephus which goes under the title *Against Apion,* in two books. The title is a misleading one, for the book does not deal with Apion only, in fact, he occupies little space there, but with all calumniators of Jews and Judaism. It is an excellent apology on behalf of his people and their faith. It can be roughly said that the first book deals with the calumniators of the Jews, and the second with those of Judaism. In a world full of hatred against the Jews, especially on the part of Greek writers who invented all kinds of calumnies against them, and who attacked the Jewish people on account of their lack of history as well as their "superstition," a book like Josephus's *Antiquities* which told in a consecutive manner and with great intelligence the long and illustrious story of the hated people, was ill received. His scholarship was doubted, his veracity impugned, and his style ridiculed. It was this clamor of the enemies which aroused Josephus to write the apology, as he himself tells us in the opening paragraphs. It might have been a personal motive for, in defending his people, he defended himself, yet, it does not detract from the value of the work.

He opens his defense with a broadside against Greek vanity. Why, he asks, are they so proud, is it because of their antiquity? Can they prove it then? Their records go only a few hundred years back, as for older times, their own historians disagree among themselves. As for their arts, they themselves admit of learning the art of writing from the Phœnicians and other arts from other nations. He then goes on to compare the records of the Egyptians and the Chaldeans with those of the Greeks and finds the former more ancient and authentic. After this introduction, he begins his real apology and proves the antiquity of the Jews from the testimony of the Egyptians and the Phœnicians, referring here to Manetho, the Egyptian priest, whose calumnies about the Exodus he will later refute, but for the present citing him as an authority for the fact that the Jews left Egypt one thousand years before the siege of Troy. He quoted also many citations from Greek writers corroborating his statements, among whom he counts also Eupolemus (see Sect. 62) whom he takes for a Greek. This is followed up by testimonies from such great Greeks as Aristotle and Hecateus to the excellency of the Jewish character and purity of their religion. He then takes up in particular the falsity of the statements of the Jewish calumniators about the Exodus and Moses, the chief of whom was Manetho, the Egyptian historian. The main contention of all these falsifiers was that the Jews were driven out of Egypt on account of their being lepers, a story which has long persisted in Græco-Roman literature, and is repeated by Tacitus. Josephus, in a number of paragraphs shows the falsity of Manetho's account, its contradictions and its slanderous character. With Manetho stand and fall the other writers, for they all based their stories on his records. But Josephus disposes of all of them, and thus ends the first book.

The second book begins with a refutation of the charges of Apion, the Egyptian stoic and grammarian, who lived in the time of Philo. Apion accused the Jews of Alexandria of being strangers in Egypt and complained of their keeping aloof from their neighbors, of their being misanthropes, and many more charges. Besides, he repeated the slanders of the vilifiers of Judaism, that the Jews worship an ass's head, and similar lies. Josephus refutes all these falsifications very skillfully one by one, and quotes the testimony of Greek writers to the nobility of the Jews. After this refutation, he begins his real apology of Judaism which constitutes the most exalted part of the whole work. He begins with a eulogy of Moses who is the oldest legislator. He describes the Jewish conception of God which represents Him as unbegotten and immutable through all eternity, superior to all mortal conceptions in pulchritude, and though He is known to us by His power, yet unknown to us through His essence.[12] This conception has indeed a fine philosophic ring. He further makes a fine point by stating that Moses did not make religion a part of virtue, but virtue a part of religion, and winds up by showing the wonderful harmony in Judaism between instruction and practice. Judaism insists on practice, while the Greeks had fine notions of virtue and even excellent laws, "but had no regard to the exercising them thereto in practice," hence the Greek laxity in morals. After dwelling on the spread of education among the Jews, Josephus goes over to a detailed exposition of the Laws. He describes the exaltedness of Jewish laws of sacrifices, purification, marriage, charity, the burial customs and duties of honor to parents. From the family law, he goes over to social laws, such as bearing on the conduct of judges, relations with strangers, care of animals, and winds up with a statement of Jewish beliefs in resurrection and reward and punishment. He ends by making an attack against paganism, showing its black and ugly side, and thus apologizes for Jewish aloofness. It does not come on the part of the Jews from being unsociable but from a desire to observe their own laws and guard their integrity. That this constitutes no offense, he proves by examples from Plato, who also insisted that the Commonwealth should keep itself pure from admixture as well as from numerous similar laws in other Greek states. He is not unconscious of the fact that such an argument from the superiority of Jewish law will give a weapon into the hands of the enemies, and fearlessly says, "If this be the disposition we are under with regard to the excellency of our laws, let our enemies make use of this concession that our laws are more excellent." [13]

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[12] Against Apion B. II, 23.

The Apology was the last work written by Josephus about the year 95, and in it, he gave the best that was in him to his people. In it he is once more the Jewish patriot and warm-hearted Jew that he was in his youth. His presentation of Judaism, though rather brief, is a masterly one, and because of its quality it survived through the ages.

68. JUSTUS OF TIBERIAS

Justus of the city of Tiberias, in Palestine, was a contemporary of Josephus who also tried his hand at writing Jewish history in Greek. Unfortunately, his works were lost, though they were preserved for several centuries and are mentioned by later Christian historians. They seemed to have consisted of two separate treatises, one called the History of the Jewish Kings from Moses to Aggrippa II, and the other dealt with the Jewish war in which he also took an active part. The History of the Kings was, however, more of the nature of a chronicle rather than a complete history like Josephus' *Antiquities*. In the History of the War, he must have gone into detail and accused Josephus of many misdeeds, as the latter felt it necessary to enter in a long polemic with Justus in his *Life*.

69. PHILOSOPHY

That the desire to harmonize Jewish teachings with Greek philosophy produced some kind of Jewish philosophy among the intellectuals in Hellenist Jewry goes without saying. We know, however, only two men who attempted the creation of such a current of thought, and of one our knowledge is very scanty, as we possess merely a few fragments of his work. That one is Aristobulus who probably lived around 150 B.C.E. The work attributed to him by Eusebius and other Christian Greek writers bore the name "An Explanation of the Mosaic Laws." It was not, however, intended to be a commentary but a kind of philosophic discourse on the Law. The author had for his object to prove that the peripatetic philosophy was dependent upon the Laws of Moses and other prophets. He, of course, had to employ allegories and many other devices to prove his contention and to show the similarity between the peripatetic philosophy and the teaching of the Bible. The main problem was the explaining away of the anthropomorphisms of God. Thus, in a fragment from a discourse on the creation of the world, which is still preserved, Aristobulus teaches that the words God said, "And it was," which are frequently repeated in the story of creation, mean nothing else but that things came into being by the operation of the powers or energy of God. In another fragment explaining the Sabbath, we find him extolling the power of the number seven in the Pythagorean manner.

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[13] Ibid. 39.

All these things do not prove him an original philosopher, as such notions were the stock in trade of every intelligent Hellenist Jew, and we will see them expressed, at length and with greater vigor, by Philo, but to him belongs the credit of being one of the first to attempt to formulate a philosophic conception of Judaism.

70. PHILO

The other philosopher who is really deserving of that name is Philo. We have already dealt with Philo's method of exegesis which is in itself a semi-philosophic production, and we will attempt to give a brief survey of his philosophic ideas which are scattered through his commentaries, as he never attempted to give a systematic statement of them.

We will begin with his doctrines of God and the world. Philo posits a dualism of God and the world. God is the primal ground or reason of everything that exists, while matter is the primal stuff. In itself, matter is without qualities and passive, and subject to the action of spirit or form. It becomes then finite and the source of imperfection. From the tenor of Philo's talk, it is inferred that he considered matter eternal, and yet he did not commit himself explicitly. God is the absolute self-determining mind, nameless and of unknown essence, though activity seems to be an essential attribute of His. All that we can say of Him is that He *is,* but not *what* He is.

Philo, being God-intoxicated, did not adduce many proofs for the existence of God, yet here and there, some are found. He produces the argument from design, namely, that the world reflects the shadow of God by its harmony and coördination. He also appeals to man to search his own mind and observe how it rules the body, and draw the analogy that likewise is the world ruled by a universal mind. He finally appeals to mysticism. "The thirsty soul," he says, "knows God immediately by direct contact." He even claims that knowledge of God is implanted in man from his very creation, and this is what is meant by man being endowed with "The Spirit of God."

The main problem for Philo was how to explain the relation of the absolutely perfect God to the imperfect world, and this he has done by bringing in intermediate causes. These are the *powers of God,* they are the connecting link between Him and the world. He sometimes calls them angels. These powers were first created by God before the world, though Philo is not clear as to what the creation actually means. They are, however, the manifestations of His constant active energy. The powers are many, but the chief are two, the regal and the creative power, or as he sometimes calls them Might and Goodness, corresponding to the Rabbinic conception of Midath Hadin, i. e. justice, and Midath Harachmim, i. e. mercy. They may be interpreted as the fixed power of nature, on the one hand, and that of Providence on the other. Over and above these, or rather the source of all powers, is *the Logos,* i. e. the Word of God. The Logos which is the chief contribution of Philo is variously conceived by him. At times, he speaks of it as the sum total of all powers, as the intellect of the universe, but at times, as the bond of the universe, as the moral law. But in no wise should it be understood as a separate person. It is only the supreme manifestation of God's activity.

It is the Logos and other powers which participated in the creation of the world and brought order into chaos. Man is created in the image of the Logos, and his soul is one of the Divine powers. The body as matter is the source of evil and imperfection; it is a prison into which the spirit is banished and is only set free on death.

Yet, with all his philosophy, he clung to the sanctity of the Torah and believed in revelation at Sinai which came from God's goodness. He was the first one to propound the theory that the voice of God delivering the Commandments was an especially created voice, a theory which was constantly repeated in Mediæval Jewish philosophy. He also believed the prophets to be the interpreters of God's spirit to which degree they attain by falling into a state of ecstasy, wherein their human consciousness and sensations cease to operate and their souls are dissolved into a higher element and become one with it. Hence, comes their power of inspiration and their source of truth.

Philo's ethics is to a great extent influenced by his view on matter and body. In man, as in the universe there is a dualism of soul and body, the soul being the source of good, the body that of evil. Yet, he does not teach, as some of his interpreters maintain, original sin. On the contrary, he claims that man is from nature neither good nor bad up to the age of seven, and the child's heart is pure and is like wax which can be molded either way.[14] He does, however, admit that man possesses an inclination towards sin, which, if not guarded against, will lead him astray. From this view of the body, it follows that the way to virtue lies through abstaining from sensual pleasures. And thus, his ethics has an ascetic ring, for he says that the fatherland of man's soul is heaven, the life of the spirit and the beautiful, and that material life is only an appearance. But here too he does not go the full length of asceticism and speaks of the body as the Temple of God. In general, his ethics on this point is contradictory, for while he speaks often in derogatory terms of life and advocates its renunciation, at times he places a high value on life. This last strain is undoubtedly due to the Jewish element in him, which kept him from following stoicism to its extreme consequences. He does in main advocate the cultivation of the four cardinal virtues of the Stoics, especially temperance, control of passions, and proportion of action, but he adds to the four virtues two more, namely, holiness and piety which are his Jewish contribution to ethics.

The *summum bonum,* though, are not these two last virtues, as in Rabbinic Judaism, but knowledge and philosophy or rather contemplation. As a matter of fact, Philo's contemplation is more a mystic joining with God than logical philosophy. This is, of course, the highest virtue, so to say the aim and goal of ethics, but in order to reach it, men must lead a virtuous life, and for the leading of this ethical life, will is the source of all practical virtues, and a good will is the most important thing. Philo thus manages to agree with the ethical tenets of the Palestinian Rabbis, for though he differs from them a great deal, he seems to have succeeded in effecting a reconciliation between the Stoic conception of knowledge as leading to virtue and the Jewish idea of a good will. He differs from the Stoics in inserting the religious element. Man cannot liberate himself, he must have the help of God and the imitation of God and the striving to emulate Him became to Philo a great ethical ideal, the very ideal so frequently emphasized in Talmudic literature.

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[14] The same idea is found in the Midrash Tanchuma to Genesis, Ch. 7. It forms however an isolated view in Rabbinic literature, as the other statements all agree that the Yezer Harah, i. e. evil desire, enters in man upon birth. May we not see in this view the influence of Philo's teaching?

Philo also gave attention to the practical side of ethics; he places great value on duty and makes it the central point in an ethical life. Of duties, there are three classes, duties to God, to self and to fellow-man. The factors that bring about an ethical life are according to Philo three, natural inclination, education and habit or practice. The last two are to him of the greatest importance and he emphasizes their need many times. In reality, the idea itself is Aristotelian, but Philo added the Jewish insistence on practice.

Philo, though thoroughly Jewish in spirit even if not always in ideas, did not exert great influence on Jewish thought, except probably on the mystics. The reason for that may be his theory of the Logos and inclination to asceticism, both of which ideas were fraught with danger for Judaism, as it was evidenced from the fact that he became a favorite with the Christian Fathers who made much of these ideas for their own purpose. It was they who preserved his writings for posterity. Yet, he deserves an honorable place in Jewish literature, both on account of his works and his personality.

C. Aramaic Translations and Exegesis

71. EARLY INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE IN ARAMAIC

With the return of the Jews from Babylon, there began the spread of Aramaic in Palestine as a spoken language, or as a vernacular, and thus there arose a competition between the two kindred languages, the Hebrew and the Aramaic. It seems, though, that by a kind of compromise Hebrew remained the language of literature and the more educated, and Aramaic became the language of the street and the common people. The lines were of course, not drawn fast, and the two languages overlapped each other in their usage. But be that as it may, under the circumstances there arose a need for the use of the Aramaic in the teaching and the interpretation of the Bible to the people. Such use was introduced in very early times, probably earlier than the Maccabean period, when the scholars began to teach and expound the Bible in the synagogues. The verses of the Bible were given by them in an Aramaic version with explanations and commentaries, both the Halakic additions and Agadic embellishments.

These translations, however, were given mostly oral, and continued so for hundreds of years. In fact, since the translations were really of an exegetic nature and contained Halakic elements, they were considered as a part of oral law which was not supposed to be written down. Yet, since it was not strict Halakah and was mostly Agada, the prohibition was not observed and we have references to complete written translations of certain books of the Bible, especially those of the Hagiographa in times before the destruction of the Temple. The Septuagint translation of Job has an addition at the end of the book of an Agadic nature on the genealogy of Job taken, as it is stated, from an Aramaic translation of that book which shows that such written translations were current in early days. A story in the Talmud[15] tells us that Gamaliel the First (50 C. E.), the grandson of Hillel, already saw a copy of an Aramaic version of Job which he ordered to be destroyed. Furthermore, the Talmud ascribes the Aramaic version of the prophetical books of the Bible to Jonathan, the son of Uziel, a pupil of Hillel, a statement, which though it should be taken in a modified form, still proves the antiquity of that translation, parts of which might have been written down in early times.

72. *THE ARAMAIC TRANSLATION TO THE PENTATEUCH PROPHETS AND HAGIOGRAPHA*

From all that has been said, it is clear that translation and exegetic activity was going on, in Palestine, for centuries. References to that activity abound in the Mishnah and the entire Talmudic literature. As a result of this activity, we have a number of Aramaic versions to the Pentateuch which on account of its importance received greater attention at the hands of the popular interpreters.

These are (*1*) the Aramaic version known as *Targum Onkelos,* (*2*) the *Jerusalem Targum* known as pseudo-Jonathan, (*3*) the fragmentary *Jerusalem Targum.*

The *Targum Onkelos* which is the standard Aramaic version of the

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[15] Babli, Sabbath 115a.

Pentateuch printed in almost every Hebrew Bible, is the oldest authoritative version, arranged according to the Talmud by a proselyte named Onkelos under the direction of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua at Jabne (about 100–130 C. E.). This Onkelos, as the Talmudic references show, was taken to have been a historic personality. But research and investigation in the sources, on the part of the scholars, has thrown great doubt on the existence of a man by that name, who was the author of that version. It is generally believed that this version arose from the attempt in the school at Jabne, chiefly through the influence of the great Akiba, to arrange from the various oral versions, which were used by the preachers on the Sabbaths, a standard one which shall meet the needs of an authorized translation. The impetus for that work was, most likely, given by the Greek translation of Aquila which was sanctioned by the heads of the schools. They felt the need for an Aramaic version like it. When the task was accomplished, it was named by some the Translation of Onkelos, which is the Aramaic pronounciation of Aquila, namely, that it resembles the translation of the latter in spirit and faithfulness to Jewish tradition. We are thus able to fix the time of its arrangement to be during the first half of the second century.

The Onkelos version is a Palestinian production, but as the need for an Aramaic version was greater in Babylon, it was immediately transported there where it became the authoritative version used in all the synagogues on the Sabbaths. It became imperative upon the Jews to read the Pentateuch together with this version. The Babylonian scholars called it "Our Targum" and numerous quotations from it are found in the Talmud. In time, changes in style were introduced to suit the Eastern Aramaic dialect current in Babylon, and also some other additions. So sacred was this version considered that it was later provided with vowel points and accents like the Hebrew Pentateuch itself.

This version was executed with great skill, and besides its literary value, it possesses high exegetic value as well, for every translation is also a commentary. On the whole, it clings closely to the text and is, as the Aquilian model, literal, yet the translator took great care to include all necessary Halakic interpretations and sometimes also Agadic, though very sparingly. The main problem for the translator was to present the Pentateuch to the people at large, for whose sake the translation was made, in the most revered and dignified manner, so as to remove all gross conceptions of God and all misconceptions of other subjects such as the characters of the founders of the nation, the occurrence of certain events, etc., which a too strict literal translation may convey. He is very careful to remove all possibility of doubt concerning the unity of God, and therefore translates the two names of God, the Tetragramaton and Elohim by one name, i. e. Adonai, the usual reading of the Tetragramaton. He is especially painstaking to remove all anthromorphisms from God, and so wherever the Pentateuch speaks of God as if performing human actions, he renders it in such a way as to remove even a shadow of that conception. Thus he renders instead of "And the Lord smelt a sweet savour" (Gen. VIII, 21) "And God received the sacrifice willingly," or instead of "And God descended to see the city and the tower" (Gen. XI, 5) "And God revealed Himself to punish the builders of the city and tower," or the expressions, "God spoke to Moses face to face" (Ex. XXXIII, II), or "My face will go with you" (Ibid. 15) by "As speaker to speaker," "my presence will go with you." And in this manner, he goes on using all kinds of circumlocutions so as to present a pure conception of God.

As the anthropomorphic expressions are many, he used various devices, but in general, he employed as substitutes three expressions, *Glory of God, Presence of God* (Shechinah) and *Word of God* (Memra) wherever the word God alone would imply a gross conception; for instance, instead of "And they saw the God of Israel" (Ex. XXIV, 10) he renders "And they saw the Glory of the God of Israel"; instead of "And they heard the voice of God" (Gen. III, 8) "And they heard the voice of the *word* of God." The use of the word *Memra* reminds us of the Philonian Logos where *The Word* is the reflection of God (see Sect. 68). He is also careful to protect the honor of the great men and women in Israel and gave dignified renderings wherever hard expressions are used about them. The expressions, "And Rachel stole the Teraphim (Gen. XXXI, 19) "And Jacob stole the heart of Laban, the Aramean" (Ibid. 20) are rendered "And Rachel *took* the Teraphim," and "Jacob *hid* his design from Laban," so as not to use unworthy expressions concerning our Patriarchs. In a similar manner, hard expressions about the people of Israel are changed. When it comes to the laws, the translator is careful to give in such places, where the reader may be easily mistaken to take the literal meaning of the law as the one to be practiced, the Halakic interpretation and, at times, even an Agadic interpretation where the verse is exceedingly difficult. We will take one example. The verse, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generations" (Ex.

XXXIV, 7) is rendered with the addition, "When the children follow the sinful ways of their fathers," an interpretation which agrees with the explanation of the rabbis. It intends to soften the harshness of judgment contained in the literal meaning of the verse, for why should innocent children suffer for the sins of their fathers? and it tells us that the sins of the fathers are only added when they themselves are sinful. Explanations of a similar nature are found in Onkelos in large numbers, thus making it not only a translation but a valuable commentary.

The *Jerusalem Targum,* called the pseudo-Jonathan, is a purely Palestinian version of the Pentateuch. It is not primarily a translation executed with care and exactness by one or more authors with a fixed purpose in mind, but a later compilation of free renderings of passages of the Pentateuch by the homiletists in the synagogues on the Sabbaths and Holidays. As such, it has no unified character, and certain verses have several renderings. On the whole, it does not cling to the text, and contains a large element of Midrashic and Agadic embellishments. It contains also a good deal of Halakah. The date of the final compilation is late, as it mentions the city of Constantinople (founded in 330 C.E.) and the establishment of the calendar (365 C.E.) and there are even mentioned the names of the wife and the daughter of Mohammed. Its final redaction must, therefore, be placed about the end of the seventh centry C.E., but not later, as we must assume that it came to fill a need in the life of the people who still spoke Aramaic. Half a century later, the Jews of Palestine and Syria already spoke Arabic, and it is hardly possible to assume that they needed an Aramaic version to the Pentateuch.

Yet, in spite of the above-named facts which point to a later date of the compilation of that version, the bulk of it hails from older times. There are a number of Aramaic renderings to verses of the Pentateuch mentioned in the Mishnah and the Talmud which are incorporated in this version. Moreover, some of the renderings are commented upon with disfavor by the Rabbinic authorities, and yet they found place in this version. All of which goes to prove that this Targum consists of various layers of renderings current in the schools and synagogues for centuries. And since it is a compilation, it is by its nature eclectic and it thus came to include renderings which were condemned by Talmudic authorities.

Its style and grammatical construction resemble greatly the language of the Palestinian Talmud, which, again, proves the older date of the larger part of its material which is also evidenced by the fact that the number of Greek words found in it is quite considerable, thus pointing to a time when Greek was current in Palestine. How this version was ascribed to Jonathan and was by the first printers named Targum Jonathan cannot be definitely explained. It is suggested, though, that since this version was not widely known during the Middle Ages, the error occurred through the mistaken reading of some copyists of the manuscripts of the title of this version. The title was undoubtedly written in abbreviated form Tav Yod (ת״י) meaning Targum Yerushalmi, i. e. Jerusalem Targum, and they read Targum Jonathan, for since the Targum to the prophets is ascribed to Jonathan, the transcribers thought that this version to the Pentateuch also belongs to him. The first printers finding manuscripts distinguished by the name Targum Jonathan printed the version under that title.

The fragmentary version to the Pentateuch, known in the printed Bibles as the Targum of Jerusalem, is only another partial recension of the main Palestinian version, for as stated, there were many renderings current and variations to many passages were frequent. It is these variations which were collected and arranged, and ultimately assumed that name.

The standard Aramaic version or Targum to the prophetical book of the Bible, i. e. from Joshua to Malachai, is ascribed by the Talmudic authorities to Jonathan, the son of Uziel, a disciple of Hillel. It would thus indicate an early date for its composition. It seems, though, that here too as in the Onkelos version, the name does not really signify the existence of a certain person who is the author of the version, but merely a certain tendency of standardization. This version of the prophets probably followed immediately after the arrangement of the Onkelos version to the Pentateuch, as some of the renderings of the latter are reproduced by it, and besides, the version to the prophets resembles in style and tendency that of Onkelos. On the whole, it is not as literal as Onkelos to the Pentateuch, but gives a freer rendering utilizing the current Agadas in many places. It is of high exegetic value, as in the places where there is no Midrash it forms a fine commentary on the text displaying deep insight into its meaning. It often deviates in the readings of the words from the adapted masoretic text, and at times agrees in these readings with the Septuagint and other translations.

The versions to the Hagiographa extend only to Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Chronicles, and the Five Scrolls. The books of Daniel, Ezra, and

Nehemiah have no Aramaic translation as they are partly written in that language. The versions to Psalms, Job, and Chronicles follow mainly in the way of the Prophetic Targum, namely, a more or less free translation, but on the whole, clinging to the text. It contains also a large element of Agada. They belong to an earlier period, in fact, as stated above, Aramaic versions to Job were current even in Temple times. The version to Proverbs is peculiar in its character inasmuch as it is entirely free from Agadic embellishments and clings closely to the text. It agrees almost entirely with the Syriac version to that book known as the Peshitta, and it is most likely modeled after it. The versions to the Five Scrolls are really no translations but homiletic Midrashim. The book of Esther has two versions, the second one being merely a collection of stories and legends, some bearing on the incidents related in the book and some having only a distant relation to the main story of Purim. The homiletic character of these versions is explained by the fact that the books were read on the holidays, and their contents were, therefore, made a subject of discussion by the preachers in the vernacular, i.e. Aramaic, and were thus expounded in a homiletic way.

D. History

73. MEGILLATH TAANIT

The Jewish scholars of the Mishnaic age were not greatly interested in the study of history as a special subject and whatever historical knowledge we may derive from the extensive Talmudic literature has to be extracted from stray notes and isolated sayings. Whether the reason for the lack of cultivation of this branch of literature was due to the fact that these leaders were themselves engaged in creating history for their people, or to the reason given by Simon, the son of Gamaliel, namely, that were they to write down the events of their time, time would be too short to chronicle all the sufferings the nation was undergoing,[16] the fact remains that we have few historical works dating from that period. Of these, two are preserved, and several lost.

The oldest of the two is the *Megillath Taanit,* literally the roll of the fast days. Curiously enough, though, the purpose of the book is opposed to what its name conveys. In reality, it gives a list of all such days, on which fasting is not permitted on account of the fact that they commemorate happy events in the history of the people. The book is arranged according to the months of the year and is thus divided into twelve chapters chronicling in each chapter the historical holidays of the month.

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[16] Sabbath 13b.

The Chronicle itself was written not later than the middle of the second century C. E. as it ends with the mention of the cessation of the persecution of Hadrian. It was written in very concise style and in Aramaic. Later, however, a scholium, i. e. a kind of Talmudic commentary, was added to it, written in Hebrew. Both the Chronicle itself as well as the commentary contain valuable historical references for the period of the Second Commonwealth and also for the one immediately following the destruction of the Temple. Especially important are the remarks concerning the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The appendix to the book contains a list of the fast days observed by the Jewish people.

74. SEDER OLAM RABBA

The other historical book of that period is the Seder Olam, i. e. the Order of the World ascribed to Jose, the son of Halafta, a disciple of Rabbi Akiba (130-160). It is a brief chronicle of the events in Jewish history from creation to the time of Alexander the Great, with some additional notes on the later events up to the destruction of the Second Temple. It is divided into thirty chapters and deals with the events in a Midrashic way. Opinions of various scholars are quoted and often the happenings of certain events, or their nature and characters are determined by homiletic interpretation of a verse. Yet, it has great historic value especially for the period ending with the destruction of the First Temple.

CHAPTER V

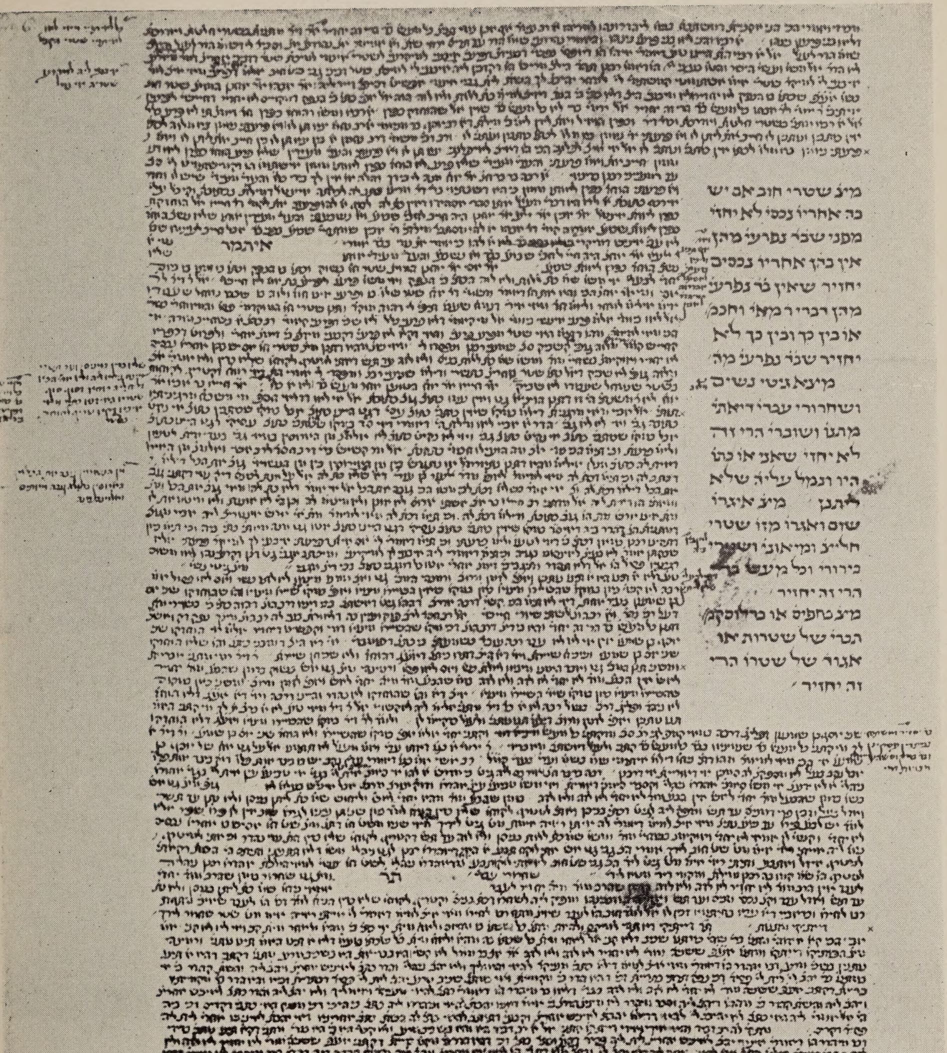
THE TALMUD

A. LITERARY ACTIVITY IN PALESTINE CULMINATING IN THE REDACTION OF THE PALESTINIAN TALMUD

75. *GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TALMUD*

Just as the Bible became the text around which there developed a literary activity, beginning with commenting upon and interpreting the verses and ultimately ending in a great aggregate of Halakic statements, so did the Mishnah in its turn become a text for further interpretations and comment by the scholars of the succeeding generations. The source of this continued scholastic activity lay in the very nature of the Mishnah, for as we have seen above, it was never intended to be a code of laws, but a mere text for study. As all texts, its statements were not concise, and many things were left unexplained and in doubt. Besides, the version, though it was likely written down, was far from perfect, and contained contradictory statements. All these reasons served as incentives to the scholars whose trained minds, logical acumen, and great zeal for study craved for literary activity. And thus, the great post-Mishnaic work, which lasted for several centuries, began and ultimately culminated in the compilation of another great book which, including the Mishnah, is known as the Talmud of which two versions exist, one the Babylonian, and the other the Palestinian.

The interpretation and comments upon the Mishnah is known as the *Gemarah* derived from a root *Gmar,* i. e. to learn, which shows the essential nature of this activity, that it primarily came to satisfy the great soul need for study, not as a means but as an end in itself. It is this *Gemarah* which constitutes the greatest bulk of the Talmud where the Mishnah forms a comparatively small part. The scholars, the builders of the great edifice, the composers of the *Gemarah,* are in distinction from the scholars of the preceding generations, *the Tannaim,* whose teachings are incorporated in the Mishnah, called *Amoraim,* i. e. commentators, those whose chief business was to expound the Mishnah.



מ״צ שטרי חוב אם יש
בה אחריו נכסי לא יחזי
מפני שב״ד נפרעי מהן
אין בהן אחריו נכסים
יחזיר שאין ב״ד נפרע׳
מהן דברי ר׳ מאי׳ וחכמ׳
או׳ בין כך ובין כך לא
יחזיר שב״ד נפרעי מה׳
מ״צא גיטי נשים
ושחרורי עבדי׳ דיאתי׳
מתנו׳ ושוברי׳ הרי זה
לא יחזי׳ שאני׳ או׳ כתו׳
היו ונמל׳ עליה׳ שלא
ליתנן   מ״צ איגרו׳
שום ואגרו׳ מזו׳ שטרי
חל״צ ומיאוני׳ ושטרי
בירורי׳ וכל מעש׳ ב״ד
הרי זה יחזיר
מ״צ בחפיס׳ או בדלוסקמ׳
תכרי׳ של שטרות או
אגוד׳ של שטרו׳ הרי
זה יחזיר

A page from the Babylonian Talmud of the Munich Codex, without commentaries, written in 1343.

The name is derived from the root *Amar,* which originally means to say, but in time it acquired the meaning to explain, to comment, and to interpret.

The method followed by these interpreters, the Amoraim, was very similar to the one followed by the scribes, or Sopherim, and later by the *Tannaim* in interpreting the Bible and developing the Oral Law, for it was the same subject-matter and the same purpose that animated this activity as those in the preceding generations, namely, to make the law an all-embracing way of life, and the task was not completed as yet.

These scholars, however, had a great advantage over the *Tannaim,* namely, they had a greater amount of material at hand, and these were the hundreds and thousands of Halakoth which were omitted from the Mishnah, a great number of which were collected in the Tosefta and other collections of individual scholars, while a large part, though not yet collected, was known to the scholars by tradition. These external Halakic statements (Bariathoth) were utilized as comparative aids in ascertaining the real meaning of the Mishnah, to correct its readings as well as to decide between conflicting opinions or statements. These comparisons, which included also the ascertaining of the names of the *Tannaim* whose statements were embodied anonymously in the Mishnah, constitute an important part of the *Gemarah.*

Another method was the analysis of the text of the Mishnah by means of logic and appliance of reason. This analysis was called *Seborah* from the root *Sabar* which means to assume, to think. This was a very effective means of interpretation and was carried to the extreme. Every word of the Mishnah was scrutinized, its meaning tested in numerous ways, and as a result very often the text of the Mishnah was corrected to suit the interpretation, or the arrangement of the statements altered. As all this discussion was carried on orally, and opinions of different men were quoted and often contrasted, it assumed enormous proportions and admitted much of casuism and extenuated analysis, hence its great bulk.

In addition, there were also added new Halakoth by the Amoraim themselves, either on the basis of deduction or decisions, peculiar application of the law, changes and variations. These new Halakoth again required explanations, verifications, and groundings either in the words of the Mishnah or even in the Bible. Besides, these scholars were not satisfied with merely interpreting the Mishnah, but also supplied reasons for the opinions stated therein, and consequently a new Midrash developed where the old rules were used and new ones added. We must not forget either that the study carried on was not always of a practical nature, for it was not considered a means but an aim, and so hypothetical questions were often propounded, and ingenious answers sought for them. Thus, the interpretations, comments, discussions, and Halakoth were ramified and constantly increased so that at the end of two centuries it reached the bulk which is contained in the Babylonian Talmud.

Both versions of the Talmud contain besides the Halakah a great part of Agada. The Babylonian about one third, and the Palestinian about one sixth. The Agada of the Talmud is of great variance. It contains stories, proverbs, medical maxims, observations of astronomy, and other sciences, and also ethics and pithy sayings on the practical ways of life. In brief, it is really a compendium of all knowledge known at the time to the scholars of the age, and not of this age alone but of the preceding ages as well.

76. THE AMORAIC SCHOOLS IN PALESTINE

Most of the scholars of the first generation, the pupils of Judah, the Prince, carried on their activity at the Academy of Sepphoris in Galilee, the seat of the Patriarch. To this generation belong Rabbi Hanina, son of Hama who presided at the Academy; Rabbi Janai, Bar Kappora, a man of great learning who was also endowed with a keen sense of humor and whose witticisms are preserved in the Talmud, and many others. A considerable number of scholars settled in Judea, and several schools were founded there. Of the Judean scholars, Rabbi Hoshaya, who on account of the great esteem in which he was held was surnamed The Great, and Joshua, the son of Levy, were the leaders. The first generation busied themselves primarily with the explanation of the Mishnah in a very plain and direct way, more in the nature of a commentary rather than the broad extensive discussion of the succeeding generations which embraced many extraneous elements. Some of the scholars busied themselves with collecting extraneous Halakic statements and comparing them with those of the Mishnah, thus laying the basis for the extended Talmudic activity. Of the latter, Hoshaya was the most active in this kind of work and specialized himself in collecting groups of statements omitted, for one reason or another, from the Mishnah. Joshua, the son of Levy, also had his own collection of Halakic statements but devoted himself with greater zeal to the explanation of the Mishnah, searched to find the reasons for its opinions, and even studied assiduously its style and single expressions and delved into their peculiar meaning. He tells of himself that once when he found a difficult and foreign word in a Bariatha, i. e. external Halakic statement, he interrogated every linguist in Palestine in order to ascertain its meaning until he found the right connotation.

The condition of the Jews in Palestine in those times were not amenable to the development of learning. Persecutions, though not severe, were not infrequent. Taxes were heavy and the economic situation of the Jews became worse from year to year. Under these circumstances, the number of schools was diminished, those of Judea were closed in a short time, and the entire intellectual activity centered in one place, in the Academy at Tiberias, in Galilee, where the court of the Patriarch had its seat, moving thither from Sepphoris. The outstanding figures in the second generation of the Palestinians scholars were Rabbi Johanan, the son of Naphcha, and Simon, the son of Lakish. Johanan (199-279), the head of the Academy, who in his youth studied in the school of Judah, the Prince, acted as the link between the older generation of Tannaim and the new school. By his great store of knowledge, he contributed greatly towards the elucidation of the Mishnah, besides establishing a number of rules for its interpretation, and the decision between the various opinions propounded there. All these regulations contributed much towards the development of the Palestinian Gemarah. Rabbi Johanan was also endowed with a great personality which distinguished him from the rest of his contemporaries. His love for the study of the Torah was unbounded, and it was he who pronounced the famous Talmudic maxim, "A scholar, though he may be illegitimately born (mamser) takes precedence over an ignorant high priest," thus inculcating the teaching that it is not riches nor noble descent which determines the value of a man but knowledge and scholarship.

Simon ben Lakish (200-275), the colleague and brother-in-law of Johanan, was a man of powerful character and mind. His youth is tinged with the color of legend. It is told that in his early days, being endowed with a remarkable physique, he was associated, in some capacity, with a band of lawless men, and that Johanan, making his acquaintance, persuaded Simon to give up his profession and devote himself to the study of the Torah, prophesying for him a great future in this field. The prophecy of Johanan was realized to the fullest extent.

Simon ben Lakish shared with Johanan the authority at the Academy, and was known as the profoundest and most penetrating intellect of his day, so that he was given the nickname "Mountain Raiser," namely, that by his keen acumen and logical analysis, he could remove all obstacles in the way of a propounded theory. His love for the Torah was no less than his mental keenness, and his assiduity in study became proverbial. His own maxim on the subject of continuous study was that the Torah says "If thou forsakest me for one day, I will forsake thee for two," namely, if a man ceases to study for one day, he forgets as much of the Law which can be acquired in two days. Ben Lakish, being a man of strong and fearless character did not hesitate to pronounce opinions of a daring nature. Thus, he ventured to say that the story of Job is only a parable intended to teach morality and not the record of an actual occurrence, that the names of the angels are of Babylonian origin; and the same daring spirit he carried in Halakic study, relying primarily upon the logical soundness of an opinion and not upon the fact that it was pronounced by many. He, therefore, gave great impetus to the development of study in his age.

It is no wonder then that under the leadership of two such men, the Academy at Tiberias, during a large part of the third century, was a great intellectual center. Students from all parts of Palestine congregated there, and even students from Babylon flocked thither. In fact, this period of activity is the heyday of Palestinian scholarship, and a large part of Palestinian Talmud dates from this period. It is also possible that the foundation of that Talmud, its plan and organization, was laid then. Some of the older writers have even ascribed to Rabbi Johanan the redaction of the Palestinian Talmud,[1] but it cannot be taken literally as we find a large part of it belonging to later generations. We must, therefore, understand that statement to refer to the mapping out of its outline by the school of Rabbi Johanan.

There were three more generations of Amoraim in Palestine, five in all, but only the one succeeding the generation of Johanan was of importance. The luster of the predecessors did not fade as yet. The leaders of this generation were Rabbis Ami and Asi, Rabbi Eliezer, son of Pedoth, the Babylonian Zeira and a number of others. These scholars not only carried on the tradition of their predecessors, but followed more or less the Babylonian method of complicated discussion, where hypothetical questions of a casuistic nature took the place of a simple commentary. A man of great ability and character in this period was Rabbi Abahu of Cæsarea. He was the acknowledged leader of the Jews in his day, their representative, on account of his knowledge of Greek, at the court of the proconsul where he was held in great favor, and an able disputant in religious controversies. Most of his disputes he carried on with the Christians whose influence in Palestine grew in strength daily. He was thus enabled by his argumentative powers and biting satire to weaken the vigorous propaganda of the early Church which carried on an extensive missionary activity in Palestine. Many of his keen remarks uttered at these disputes are preserved in both versions of the Talmud.

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[1] Maimonides in his Preface to the Code.

With the passing of this generation, Palestinian scholarship began to decline. With Christianity becoming, from the time of Constantine, the dominant religion in the Roman Empire, the position of the Jews in Palestine changed for the worse. Persecutions became more frequent, the Church, seeing in Judaism its inveterate enemy, exerted great pressure upon the Emperors to issue edict after edict against both the Jews and Judaism. Study was made difficult, the number of scholars decreased, many of them emigrated to Babylon, and the activity of the schools diminished. There are few outstanding names among the last two generations of scholars. Their activity became more and more sporadic. As conditions grew worse from day to day, the few remaining scholars decided to effect a compilation of the Talmud, to arrange in some order all the comments, additions, discussions, and remarks in both Halakah and Agada said and traduced by the scholars of the preceding generations. This compilation or redaction seems to have been entrusted to one by the name of Jose, the son of Bun. So aggravating were the conditions of the Jews, and of such a haphazard manner was the scholastic activity, at the time, that we do not even know definitely the date of the redaction of this great work, and we place it, on assumption, in the third quarter of the fourth century C. E.

B. LITERARY ACTIVITY IN BABYLON AND THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD

77. *THE BABYLONIAN SCHOOLS*

Turning to the second great center of Jews and Judaism, namely, Babylonia, we meet with a bright picture of the condition and situation of the Jews in that land. Not only did they enjoy full rights and great economic prosperity, but also almost an autonomous government. The

Persian rulers were liberal and greatly respected the Jewish religion, and did not interfere with the management of the internal affairs of the Jews. These were under the charge of the Exilarch, the chief of the exile who was as a rule a descendant of the House of David. This Exilarch had broad powers and was even recognized by the king as the representative of the Jews. Such conditions were favorable towards fostering intellectual activity. But, as long as Palestine held the spiritual hegemony, the Jews of Babylonia looked towards it for guidance and knowledge and Babylonian scholars went there to study. With the completion of the Mishnah, however, the situation changed.

Abba Areka (175–247) or, as he was later known, Rab, i. e. the master, on account of his greatness and activity, himself a Babylonian, came back in the year 219 C. E. to his homeland from Palestine where he studied under Judah, the Prince. His coming marks the beginning of an epoch of intellectual activity.

Rab brought the Mishnah there, and, together with his colleague, Samuel (180–254) who conducted a school at Neardea, began to teach. Soon, he founded his own school at Sura and students began to flock thither. Rab and Samuel not only expounded the Mishnah, but analyzed it, compared it with other Halakic statements, propounded questions, and gave to them various answers. Each one of them chose a special branch for specialization, Rab chose the field of religious law, and Samuel that of civil law, the statements and discussions of each preponderate in these two fields respectively. Besides, being a great Halakic scholar, Rab was also an Agadist of note, and even tried his hand at composing liturgical pieces, especially for the New Year's services which were adopted in our prayer books. His great personality gave him the power to exert influence over the Jews of Babylonia, and he succeeded in raising his homeland to a seat of learning which even took precedence over that of Palestine.

Samuel was distinguished by his logical mind and analytical power. He, therefore, found in the field of civil law play for his mental powers. Like his colleague, he devoted himself to the elucidation of the Mishnah, ascertaining the right reading, introducing emendations by logical research. He also deduced many new rules of interpretation and laid down a number of regulations in civil law which he propounded himself, in order to facilitate the dispensing of justice. Samuel also was famed as both astronomer and physician, and applied his knowledge in these two sciences to good advantage in the study of the Torah, such as the solving of the knotty problems of calendar fixation, where astronomical knowledge is of great help, or in problems relating to trepha, i.e. meat prohibited from being eaten, and kindred subjects where medical knowledge is required. These two constitute the leaders of the first generation of the Babylonian Amoraim who laid the foundation of the Gemarah.

Rab and Samuel were succeeded by Rab Huna (212–292) and Rab Judah, the son of Ezekiel (220–299), who became the leaders of the second generation of Amoraim. Huna presided at the Academy at Sura, and Judah founded his own Academy at Pumbedita. These were the two great Academies of Babylonia which radiated learning and culture to the Jews of the Diaspora for a period close to a thousand years. Under the successors of Rab and Samuel, studies progressed greatly, the number of students increased to such a degree, that the Sura school alone is said to have contained over eight hundred students, beside the number attending Pumbedita and also some smaller schools presided over by other famous scholars of the period. Huna followed the methods of his master Rab, and continued to expound the Mishnah as well as to deduce new Halakoth. But real keenness of mind which opened a new way of study, namely, that of dialectic and subtle reasoning, was displayed by Judah. He was called by his master Samuel, "Sharpminded," and this method he introduced at the Academy at Pumbedita. The method stimulated discussion and attracted the best minds of the day to his school. So skilled were the dialecticians of Pumbedita that they were spoken of ironically as Pumbeditians who carry an elephant through the eye of a needle, namely, they accomplish the impossible.

Intellectual intercourse was constantly going on between Babylonia and Palestine, scholars were going to and fro so that there was a continual interchange of opinion. The same subjects were discussed in both places, opinions of Palestinian scholars were quoted in Babylonia, and vice versa, quite frequently an answer of a Babylonian to a question of a Palestinian in a certain legal discussion was carried across by an itinerant scholar, and the latter in turn sent his refutation of the answer back to Babylonia, either by the same messenger, or by another traveling student. And thus, study increased, knowledge deepened, minds trained and sharpened, and layers of the Gemarah were added. Besides Huna and Judah, there were other great scholars in that generation, such as Rab Nachman of Neardea, the disciple of Samuel, who like his master specialized in civil law, and distinguished himself by his deep analysis of law and the supplying of reasons for each decision. Another great scholar was Rab Hisdah of Kaphri, who in his old age succeeded to the presidency of the Sura Academy at the death of Huna.

The dialectic method introduced by Judah at Pumbedita which ultimately held sway at both Academies opened a broad way for Halakic study and research; no more was the Gemarah limited to a commentary or explanation of the Mishnah, but became a production in itself. Subjects upon subjects were piled up and joined together, though loosely but in some connected way, hypothetical cases and problems were discussed and solved, and the work grew in bulk. In this new way, the succeeding two generations of Amoraim led the way. The leaders of the third generation were Rabbah, the son of Nachmani (270–332), and Joseph, the son of Hiyya (270–334), both presiding at the Academy at Pumbedita succeeding each other. Rabbah was the keener mind of the two and followed in the footsteps of his teacher, Judah. His skill in dialectic attracted a great crowd of students, at times said to number twelve hundred, and he was also given the title of "Mountain Raiser and Grinder," i. e. a remover of all intellectual obstacles. He operated mainly with the Seborah, that analysis and logical interpretations of laws, opinions, and decisions, which in turn gave rise to new opinions and statements. Joseph, on the other hand, excelled in possessing accumulated knowledge, a great stock of Mishnoth, external statements or Bariathoth, and other statements traduced from the preceding generations. By means of this knowledge, he operated in his teachings comparing texts and contents of Halakoth, refuting unbiased opinions propounded by overzealous dialecticians, and pronounced his own decisions always based on traditional teaching. On account of his great knowledge, he was nicknamed *Sinai,* namely, one who is the treasure house of Torah, like Mount Sinai was the physical place where the Torah was given.

The climax of extensive commentaries on the Mishnah, as well as on the statements of the preceding scholars and of dialectic discussion, was reached during the fourth generation of Amoraim. The leaders of that generation were Abayi (280–338) and Raba (299–352). The real name of Abayi was Nachmani, being named after his grandfather, but his uncle, Rabba, nicknamed him Abayi which means my father, since he bore the same name. The name of Raba was Aba, which joined with the Rab, became Raba in the abbreviated form. Abayi succeeded Joseph as head of Pumbedita, and Raba conducted his own school at *Mechusa.* These two carried the dialectic method to the extreme, their dicsussion touched upon every point whether it had any relation with the Mishnah or even with reality, or not. Any hypothesis in the field of Law that the human mind could only grasp and discuss, was a welcome subject in their schools. Sharp-mindedness and keenness of intellect was their delight. Raba used to say, "I prefer a single pungent pepper than a basket full of melons," meaning by it that a single flash of thought was preferred by him to a number of ready-made statements, though they may be right and important. Their method of teaching received a special name, "Havaioth of Abayi and Raba," i. e. the arguments of Abayi and Raba. The pair were assiduous scholars and their discussions occupy an important part of the Gemarah. There is hardly a page in the entire Talmud where the name of either is not mentioned.

Their successors of the fifth generation whose leaders were Papa, the son of Nachman, Nachman, the son of Isaac, and others, followed the way of their predecessors but lacked their ability. In general, a spirit of weakness is already noticeable in the course of study, possibly as a reaction from great mental effort. At any rate, the Gemarah, which contained layer upon layer of comment, interpretation, discussion, and opinion which were loosely connected with each other, and in addition, carried around in the memories of the scholars, traduced orally from generation to generation, was greatly in need of arrangement and systematization. Otherwise, it was in danger of being forgotten. The burden became too heavy for any human memory. Some master mind had to come and weld its loose joints into a great production, to group the various opinions according to a system, to forge the links into one chain which should withstand the battering of time and change, so as to transmit to the future generations a complete spiritual heritage.

78. THE REDACTION OF THE TALMUD

The master mind was found; he was Ashi, the son of Shimi (352–427). He was a descendant of a noble and scholarly family, and was himself endowed with great mental ability. Besides, he was also blessed with riches and possessed great influence at the royal court. All these qualities and endowments made him the man fit to carry out the great task. When he was elected to the presidency of the Academy at Sura at the age of twenty-three, Ashi devoted himself to his life ambition. His great name drew to Sura a large crowd of students and the great gathering facilitated the work. Close to thirty years were spent by Ashi and his colleagues in arranging the great mass of material in the desired order, according to various tractates of the Mishnah. As there are about sixty tractates, two tractates a year were redacted, one during each study month of the academic semester. Full academy sessions were held only two months in the year, namely, Adar and Elul, which were know as Kalah months (probably derived from the root Klal, to crown, as these were the crowning months of the Academy). During the other months, the scholars who were business or professional men studied at home. The enormity of the task required great carefulness in revision, and Ashi determined to devote an equal number of years to revising the work, thus the two editions consumed a period of close to sixty years.

With the death of Ashi, the Talmud was almost completed, yet there remained many things to be improved upon, gaps to be filled, weak spots to be strengthened, and other things to be straightened out. This work of completing and perfecting the great edifice was left to the successors. The work proceeded rather slowly, for sixty-eight years the scholars were engaged in the task, which consisted not only in perfecting the arrangement, but also of adding some new things here and there. Chief among the later builders of the Talmud were Tabume, the son of Ashi, Meramor, and especially Rabina, the son of Huna, who put the final touches to the work. He died in 499, leaving the Talmud complete, and Jose, his successor, in the following year (500 C. E.) declared it officially closed.

As is evident from the time consumed in this arrangement and from the number of tractates edited each year, there was originally a *Gemarah* to each of the tractates of the Mishnah. But we possess *Gemarahs* only to thirty-seven tractates in the Babylonian Talmud, and to thirty-nine in the Palestinian one. What happened to the rest of the *Gemarahs* cannot be ascertained definitely. It is possible that it was lost accidentally, but more probable that the *Gemarahs* to certain tractates were purposely omitted by the successors of the *Amoraim,* the scholars named *Saburaim*. The reason for it is the fact that these tractates deal with laws and customs which are not observed after the destruction of the Temple, such as those contained in the order of *Zeraim* which, with the exception of the tractate *Berachoth,* treat of the laws of tithes, Sabbatical year, and other things, or the entire order of *Taharoth* dealing with laws of purification related to kinds of uncleanliness which ceased to be operative with the destruction of the Temple. It is also possible that the coypists were less careful in copying such tractates which did not deal with laws observed in post-exilic times. It is interesting, however, to note that the *Gemarah* to the order *Kadashim,* dealing mainly with the cult of the Temple proper, was carefully preserved in the Babylonian Talmud. It is lost, though, in the Palestinian, but earlier Jewish authorities mention its existence. The reason for the retention of these tractates may be the hope that was alive in the heart of the Jew that at any moment the Temple may be restored and thus the discussion of its laws was of prime importance. The Palestinian Talmud has *Gemarah* to the ten tractates of the order *Zeraim* nine of which are missing in the Babylonian. There, the separating of the tithes and other practices connected with agriculture were observed even in post-exilic times.

79. THE PALESTINIAN AND THE BABYLONIAN TALMUDS

When we compare the two versions of the Talmud, the Babylonian and the Palestinian, we are astounded at the difference between them. The latter, as compared with the former, appears by its side as a man stunted in his growth beside one fully developed and grown to full size. Not only is the quantity of the Palestinian Talmud about one seventh or eighth of the Babylonian, but its quality also falls much below that of the latter. It is true that the Palestinians were more simple and direct in their interpretations, and their minds worked in a straighter line, and as a result, their remarks are very often nearer the true meaning of the Mishnah. But on the other hand, they lack the keenness of mind, the dialectic skill, the logical analysis and the wide sweep of the Babylonians. The Palestinians are too brief in their opinions and do not develop them, their remarks are stunted and cryptic. But the real difference lies in the edition. The Palestinian Talmud reflects the conditions of the times, the persecutions and sufferings that the Jews were undergoing; the work was, therefore, done with an impatient spirit, in a haphazard way. Subjects were placed side by side without any connection; halakoth are brought in abruptly without introduction, or they are not even completed; quotations are not cited fully but in an abbreviated manner, so that the student remains confused and perplexed. In brief, it was edited under great stress, the persecutions pressed hard upon the scholars, and they were anxious to complete the work as speedily as possible, that the future generations should have before them a basic text to work upon and to improve. But conditions became worse, and as a result, study in the schools either ceased altogether or sank to such a low degree that no work of a creative nature could be undertaken. And thus, the Palestinian Talmud remained in its incomplete and unfinished state.

The Babylonian Talmud, on the other hand, presents an entirely different picture. It is well edited and skillfully compiled. The editors had sufficient time and leisure to do their great work. Several generations working assiduously for over a hundred years contributed to the erection of this edifice. Subjects are joined together by logical connections, though it is true that at times the connection is a bit strained and fanciful, but there is an effort to avoid abruptness, quotations are given in full, and editorial explanations or decisions abound. In general, the Babylonian method as indicated was of a more subtle, dialectic nature. It analyzed the subject under discussion to a nicety, point by point was examined and put to test, so that when the discussion was completed, there remained no dark phase on which light was not thrown. Such a method tended to make matters complex, for in elucidating a subject, comparisons were employed, analogies were used, other subjects which in turn required elucidation were included, and so the whole discussion assumed the aspect of an argumentative chain, the links of which are of different material yet present a general harmonious character.

Just as these two Talmuds differ in character so do they differ in style. The Palestinian uses a vernacular which consists of a mixture of Hebrew with the West Aramaic dialect, while the Babylonian employed together with the Hebrew the East Aramaic dialect which is closer to the language of the Targum. On the whole, there is a greater use of Hebrew in the Babylonian than in the Palestinian Talmud. The style of the Babylonian Talmud is clear and lucid, and very often tends to verbosity, also here and there, it is tinged with a bit of humor which is not even wanting in discussions of a strict legal nature. The Palestinian, on the other hand, is not only abrupt, but cryptic and generally dry, except when it comes to Agada, but even there, a sad spirit prevails. The shadow of suffering and strain rests both upon content and style.

80. THE SPIRIT OF THE TALMUD

It is almost an impossibility to convey to one, who has not himself spent years in the study of this remarkably complex work—the Talmud—which took centuries for its completion, an idea of its nature and character. At the best, he can only get a glimpse of it, and the rest must be left to the imagination. The first thing which singles out the Talmud as a work *sui generis,* distinguishing it from other literary endeavors, is the completeness of its world, for it is not mere literature, where only a part of human life is reflected, but a whole world in itself, where the diverse currents of the life of a people during centuries flow side by side and, at times, mingle and cross each other. Its unity with life at the time of its making is unique, there is no rift between the two. It flowed out of it as waters gush from a bubbling well, and hence its diversity of subjects as well as its general unity. It is true, it deals, to a great extent, with law, but it is not the hardened law of the court and lawyer, but the law of the everyday life of the Jew, the law of social relations, the law of the family, the law of the individual in his home, in the field, in the market place, and in the synagogue, school and assembly place, the law describing the minutiæ of exercises and ceremonies connected with the birth of a child, its growing into manhood or womanhood, marriage and marital life, and ultimately death and burial. Perhaps, the term law is not adequate, it is in reality conduct. The Talmud deals with the complete conduct of the life of man in all its multifarious relations and phases. But complete conduct is really complete life, and life cannot be regulated. Life is ruled by spontaneous outbursts of feeling, of emotions of hope and despair, of thought and reflection. Hence, the Talmud deals not only with law but with medicine as far as it affects conduct, with astronomy and meteorology in their relations to human life and occupations, with the rules and methods of agriculture as it was practiced by the people in their daily tasks, and a host of other things which in life are linked together directly and indirectly, with the wisdom of the everyday man culled from hard experience and expressed for brevity's sake in adages, proverbs, saws, and epigrams and finally with the suffering of the people in the present, as well as with their hopes for a better and brighter future. This is only a partial description of the world embodied in the Talmud.

Several factors contributed to this completeness and wholeness. First, the favorable political and economic conditions of the Jews in Babylonia. True, the Jews there were in exile, but except in times of occasional persecutions, the yoke of subordination was hardly felt. They had complete autonomous government of inner affairs, their own courts, their own chiefs of the exile, whole districts were occupied by the Jews where they engaged in agriculture, trade, and commerce and Jewish life was as prevalent in the market place as in the home and the synagogue. Nor, was there any struggle with foreign culture. The Babylonian and Persian cultures were on a lower level than the Jewish and no foreign influence was entertained. In the districts inhabited by the Jews hardly any Persian was spoken, and Aramaic was the language of the Jews and gentiles alike, the very same language which in the schools mixed so well with Hebrew. Under such ideal conditions, it is no wonder that Jewish life was a complete life, and that Jewish culture was whole without rifts and crevices occasioned by encroachments of foreign cultures.

The second factor was the peculiar conception of the Torah which was the very center of Jewish cultural and spiritual life. This conception, the origin of which can be traced to the prophets and which struck root in life during the Second Commonwealth when religion became the dominant factor, has many phases, but in general, they may be subsumed under two aspects (*a*) the Torah as the sum total of all good and wisdom and (*b*) as a teaching and way of life for the group and the individual. Under the first aspect, it is almost unequaled in the history of human thought. The Torah becomes the very purpose of the existence of the world, and certainly that of man. Under the second aspect, it is everything which conduces to complete human conduct, law, ethics, and teachings of life. Under such conditions, the study of the Torah is not a means but an end, and there is no set limited period for its completion. All life is not sufficient for the study of the Torah. There is continual advancement, ever-growing progress.

But as great as is the importance of the Torah for the individual Jew, it is still greater for the nation as a whole. To Israel, the people of the Torah, it is the very essence of its collective life, the *raison d'être* of its existence, and the second fatherland. Has it not been expressed by the Rabbis, "God, the Torah, and Israel are one"? All this brought about a unique state of adult education which thus far has hardly been equaled anywhere else. As a result, study did not stop with the boy growing into manhood but continued to a later period. Scholarship was no profession, the Academies of Sura and Pumbedita were no universities where degrees were granted at the end of a stated period, and the students were not confined within its walls. They were men of trade and work, taking to the study of the Torah as to a labor of love, as an exercise of play and pleasure. And when the desire moved them, or at the stated months of assembly, they came to the Academy, some from the fields, and some from the workshop, some from behind the counter, and even some from the breweries and wine presses, to exchange opinions and decide upon intellectual and spiritual questions. Thither they brought their daily experience of trade, agriculture, or profession, or practical medicine, or meteorological observation, and utilized all this accumulated store of knowledge in various ways in the discussion, whether Halakah or Agada. Furthermore, these scholars, though not professionally so, were teachers of the people, and each of them preached to the congregations in the synagogues, some Halakah, and still more Agada in its various phases, principles of faith, ethics, rules of life, and even advice in matters of business and trade. These popular lectures were illustrated with known stories and adages taken from everyday life in all phases. It is due to this closeness to folk life that many Agadic portions of the Talmud are steeped in the simplicity of the folk spirit, and, here and there, are tinged with the exaggerated naïveté and even with the superstition of the folk mind.

The third factor was the fact that study was oral. As such, it knew no bounds, it had no limit. The discussion swelled according to the mood of the participants. It assumed the nature of mental sport and gymnastics. Whoever could display his mental keenness, his brilliancy of argumentation and sharpness of analysis was welcome to this arena of the intellect. There was only one purpose animating them all, "To increase the study of the Torah and strengthen it" (Lehagdil Torah V'lehadira). In an oral discussion, all means are permissible, far-fetched comparisons are brought, the bounds between Halakah and Agada are obliterated, and all faculties of the mind are brought into play. This quality of oral study might have jeopardized the logical order, the finishing polish of a written work, but it added the flavor of vivacity, the freshness of repartee, the scintillating wit and humor of a face-to-face discussion. In compilation, even when the Talmud was written down, no attempt was made to give it the stiff character of carefully composed treatises, but its original character was retained.

These three factors and a number of others gave to the Talmud its peculiarity and uniqueness, its encyclopedic and all embracing aspect. And it verily deserves the nickname of the *Sea* or the *Ocean* of the Talmud, for it does represent the latter with its swells and storms, its depth and expanse, its hues and colors, its exotic plants, and even its intellectual Leviathans who swam and still swim in its waters and raise the dialectic spray.

81. THE ORDER OF THE TALMUD

The Gemarah, as stated, is a commentary on the Mishnah and follows, of course, the order and the division of the latter. As each tractate of the Mishnah is divided into chapters, and these into sections of single Mishnoths dealing with a single subject at a time, so does the commentary run. Each section of a chapter or a Mishnah is taken up. It is analyzed, compared, and while the discussion goes on, it broadens out when a Bariatha is brought for comparison. The Bariatha itself becomes a subject of interpretation and explanation and other statements are again quoted to explain the Bariatha. These statements may in turn become a subject for discussion, and thus the argument swells, sometimes even in geometric proportion. At times, the explanatory statement of an Amorah is itself placed under analysis, especially if the man who pronounced it is one of the earlier scholars. Under the circumstances, the connection is a loose one and the relation strained. There was one more factor that contributed to the looseness of the connection between parts, and that is the mnemonic devices employed by the scholars. One of these devices was the grouping together of the statements of one man. The same man might have pronounced three or four statements on different subjects, but when one was mentioned the others were also given as long as they bore the name of the same author. It thus happens that in a heated Halakic discussion, the explanation offered by a certain Amorah is quoted and immediately after, the subject is interrupted, and statements of verse interpretations of an Agadic nature by the same man are brought in. These Agadic matters require elucidation, or they may be connected with similar explanations. And thus, Agadah takes the place of Halakah to the extent of a few pages or more, when the subject is exhausted the Halakic thread is picked up again and the discussion continues. The same happens when diverse Halakic statements of one man follow in succession. The entire thing presents the aspect of a vast machinery where wheels within wheels keep on turning all for the same purpose. When all that can be said about one Mishnah is given, the second one is taken up, and so on until the chapter is completed, and chapter follows chapter until the treatise is completed.

In completing the chapter on the Talmud, it remains for us to say a few words as to the influence of the Talmud on Jewish life. The Talmud became, next to the Bible, the Book of the Jew, and at times, its study superseded that of the Bible. It was, for generations, the only set of books into which the Jew engrossed his soul by means of its intricacies and delicate web of syllogism. The Jewish youths sharpened by its study their minds and attained intellectual acumen and agility; from its mellow legends and exotic stories, the Jew drew inspiration and solace in the hard struggle of life. Its epigrams and *bon mots* became part and parcel of the daily vernacular of the Jew, and every dialect spoken by the Jews is saturated with them, and even the ignorant employ them in their speech.

CHAPTER VI

THE AGADIC COLLECTIONS

82. *THE LARGE HOMILETIC MIDRASHIM*

The compilation of the Talmud in its two versions which marks the end of a period of great literary activity gave a great impetus to collectors and compilers in similar fields of literary endeavor, namely, in that of Agada. True, a great part of the Agada was also included in the Talmud, but there it lacks system and completeness, and the Agadic statements are given as supplements to Halakic passages, and very often only by the reason that they happen to be stated by the same participants in the Halakic discussion. A need was, therefore, felt for the systematization and organization of the great mass of Agadic matter which has been accumulating through the generations and which was only written down to a very small extent, and mostly transmitted orally from one generation of preachers to another.

The need was especially felt in Palestine. There, where persecutions were most frequent and life for the Jew a hard and bitter struggle, the people looked for comfort and alleviation from misery. In the mild semi-poetic, and soothing words of the Agada, they found a balsam for their bleeding hearts, and the Agadist was a very beloved person among the Jews of the Holy Land. The synagogues were thronged on Saturdays and holidays by listeners who were enchanted by the words of the preacher which carried them away into a different world far more noble and beautiful than the one in which they lived and suffered. Under these circumstances, the Agada increased and expanded. Each preacher not only repeated the words of his predecessor, but also added something of his own. However, the people were not satisfied with mere oral sermons, they wanted to have Agadic books which they should be able to read and study in their homes and schools. And thus, the compilation began.

Most important of the Agadic collections are the books known as Large Midrashim which are ten in number, five to the five books of the Pentateuch, and five to the Five Scrolls (Megilloth), i. e. Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. They are denominated Large (Rabba) on account of their quantity, in order to distinguish them from smaller collections to these Biblical books. The time of compilation of these books lasted for several centuries, as one of these Midrashim is as late as the 12th century, but as the material is ancient and only the arrangement is of later date, they all belong to the Agadic literature. Most of these Midrashim were compiled in Palestine, for it is the land of the Agada, but one or two of these books seem to have been edited in Babylonia. But it really mattered little whether an Agadic book was edited in Palestine or Babylonia, as the material is of a similar nature. Agada, like Halakah, traveled from one country to the other, and the Babylonian scholars were as well versed in the Palestinian Agada as in their own, nor were the Palestinian preachers unacquainted with the Agadic statements of their Babylonian brethren. The Midrashim, therefore, contain sayings, parables, interpretations of verses, stories and proverbs of both Palestinian and Babylonian scholars alike, except that the Palestinian element is predominating.

The earliest Midrash is the *Genesis Rabba;* its date of compilation can safely be placed about the beginning of the sixth century. It was composed in Palestine, and is a representative example of Palestinian Agada. Leviticus Rabba is likewise one of the older Midrashim, and was compiled immediately after the one on Genesis or even contemporaneously. It seems, however, that though the compiler was a Palestinian, he already made use of the Babylonian Talmud as he employed some of its technical terms.

Next in chronological sequence comes *Echah Rabba,* i. e. the Midrash to Lamentations, which is a pure Palestinian product, as its material is to a great extent drawn from the Palestinian Talmud and Genesis Rabba. It is prefaced by a long introduction (Petichta) consisting of thirty-three short homilies on the first verse of Lamentations. Of various dates but bearing the stamp and impress of Palestine are the Midrashim to the other Scrolls (Megilloth) in consecutive order, Canticles, Ruth, Kohelleth, and Esther. The first two are of older date not later than the end of the seventh century; while the date of the latter two can not be determined with accuracy, they are earlier than the other Midrashim to the Pentateuch. Two of these Midrashim, namely, Ruth and Esther, are, like Echah Rabba, provided with introduction which contain primarily homilies to the first verses of the respective books. The Five Scrolls were read in the synagogue on the holidays, namely, Canticles on Passover; Ruth, Lamentation, Kohelleth, and Esther on Feast of Weeks, Ninth of Ab, Tabernacles, and Purim, respectively, and as such were, of course, made the subject of interpretation and homilies, hence, the comparatively large quantity of Agadic statements and interpretations which center around these books that was ultimately collected in Midrashim.

The other Midrashim to the Pentateuch are of later date. The earliest among them is the Exodus Rabba which was compiled about the end of the seventh century. This is followed by *Debarim Rabba,* i. e. Midrash to Deuteronomy, which shows signs of later authorship, probably 900 C. E., and the very latest, is *Bamidbar Rabba,* the one to Numeri, which most likely received its present shape not earlier than the beginning of the twelfth century, as it is not quoted by any other earlier authors. The editors of these books quote extensively not only from the Babylonian Talmud but from other Agadic collections and especially the author of the one to Numeri was already acquainted with the poems of Eliezer the Kalir (see Sect. 116), later mystic teachings, and the later books of Kabbala, all of which goes to prove its late date of compilation.

83. THE TANCHUMA CYCLE TO THE PENTATEUCH

Besides the cycle of Rabba, i. e. large Midrashim to the Pentateuch, there exists another Midrashic cycle to these books, known as the Tanchuma-Yelamdenu-Midrashim. The first name is given to it on account of the numerous homiletic interpretation of verses quoted in the name of Tanchuma, the son of Abba, a famous Palestinian Agadist who lived towards the end of the fourth century. The second name of this cycle arises from the fact that a very large number of homilies open with the formula Yelamdenu Rabenu, i. e. may our master teach us. It begins with a question in Halakah, and while the Halakic matter is dispensed with in a few words, the preacher turns to Agada and homiletic interpretation.

Of this kind of Midrashim, we have several versions, (*1*) an older Midrash which was known to the early scholars of Italy and France by the name of *Yelamdenu,* but which is now practically lost except for a few fragments. (2) The printed *Tanchuma.* (*3*) The Manuscript *Tanchuma* which was edited and published in 1883 by the late Solomon Buber. All these three belong to one Midrashic cycle, and the Yelamdenu seems to have been the earliest, as collections of such homilies where the Halakah was joined to the Agada, inasmuch as the preacher was a teacher of both, existed in large numbers. It is these collections which served as the background and source books for the latter Midrashim, the compilers of which have drawn upon them in abundance. For this reason, we find the homilies beginning with the formula, "May our master teach us," scattered through all Midrashic cycles such as the Tanchuma, Pesikta (Sect. 84) and in the books of the Rabba (Sect. 85). The date of the Yelamdenu collections is, therefore, an early one and is probably contemporaneous with the *Genesis Rabba,* about the beginning of the sixth century C. E., and the place of origin, Palestine.

Of the other two versions, namely, the *Tanchumas,* the printed one seems to have been the earlier, but it could not have been the work of the author whose name it bears, as there are evidences which show definitely that the compiler was acquainted with the Karaite movement, with the works of Gaonim written in the eighth century and other late events. The date of compilation is, therefore, placed by most scholars to be the second half of the ninth century. As for the place where the author lived, there exists amongst scholars a difference of opinion. Some think it to be Babylonia, while some take it to be Southern Italy. But as their proofs for such assumptions are not conclusive, it is not impossible to assume that the home of the Tanchuma is likewise Palestine. The manuscript Tanchuma is not much younger than the printed Tanchuma. It dates most likely from the end of the ninth century and is an incomplete version, as it contains new material only to the first three books of Moses, the other two are alike in both. It was compiled in Palestine.

84. THE PESIKTA CYCLE

Besides the sets of the Midrashim which follow the books of the Pentateuch, section after section, in a more or less order of sequence, there is found another cycle of homilies which are known as the *Pesikta,* derived from the root *Pasek,* i. e. to divide, to cut. The meaning of the word is section, inasmuch as these homilies deal only with selected passages of the Bible, as well as that of the Prophets. These passages constitute the readings of the Torah on the holidays and special festive Sabbaths such as the Sabbath during Chanukah, or the four Sabbaths preceding Passover which have special readings. It also contains twelve homilies to the Prophetic readings (Haftorahs) of the twelve Sabbaths preceding Succoth, beginning with the three weeks of mourning before the ninth of Ab, and followed by the seven weeks of joy from Sabbath Nachamu, i. e. comfort, and the two Sabbaths of penitence. All these readings, both those of the Pentateuch, as well as the special prophetic portions, have special significance, and were made the subjects of discourse. These discourses were collected and because of their discursiveness were named Pesiktas, i. e. homiletic sections.

Of the Pesikta, there are two versions: (*1*) *Pesikta D'Rabbi Kahana* and (2) *Pesikta Rabbatai,* i. e. the large one. The first one is the older, and though it is not compiled by Kahanah, a Babylonian-Palestinian Amora of the second generation to whom it is ascribed, it belongs to the older Midrashim and its date of compilation can not be later than the end of the seventh century, the place of the compiler, Palestine. Some scholars, however, consider Babylonia to be the place of compilation, yet the material employed, the names of the Agadists, and the large number of Greek words used point undoubtedly to Palestine. It contains thirty-one *Piskoth,* i. e. homilies.

The second one is a much later collection, the date of its compilation is stated in the book itself to be 845 C. E. It shows signs of the younger Agada and is distinguished especially by the use of Hebrew words and expressions instead of Aramaic employed by the earlier Midrashim, by its poetic style, and by snatches of rhymed poetry which shows an acquaintance with the school of Neo-Hebrew poetry which began to flourish in Palestine in the seventh century. The large Pesikta is not compiled in an orderly manner, as it contains many duplicate homilies to the same passages and other signs of confusion. On the whole, it is a careless collection of statements drawn from previous compilations, such as the Tanchuma and the Yelamdenu collections. On that account, it contains many homilies beginning with the well-known formula, "May our master teach us," and most of its material can be traced to their sources. It contains in all forty-six sections.

85. NATURE AND CHARACTER OF MIDRASHIC LITERATURE

The Agada contained in all these collections belongs primarily to homiletic Agada. It was, as pointed out previously an outgrowth of the activity of the synagogue preachers and its motive was the interpretation of the Bible in all ways and manners possible. Sometimes the commentary method was used and sometimes the pure preaching method, where a verse, merely used as a text, was employed. It is for this reason that the books included in these collections bear various characters.

Some approach that of a commentary and some that of a collection of short sermons. Of the Rabba cycle, those resembling more the character of a homiletic commentary are the Genesis Rabba and most of the Midrashim to the Scrolls. In Genesis Rabba, each verse is taken up and interpreted. But in order not to make the book an unwieldy mass of one gigantic piece, it was divided into chapters, the number of which is one hundred. This division is more or less an arbitrary one, as it does not correspond to any of the several divisions of the book itself, but they are merely devised to break up the entire subject into smaller sections to facilitate study and reading. The same method is followed to a large degree in Exodus Rabba and the Midrashim to the Scrolls.

The homily or sermon method is the one used by two other cycles, the Tanchuma and Pesikta cycle and also by Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy Rabba. The last two contain in general much borrowed material from the *Tanchuma* or from the *Pesikta,* and follow, of course, their method. Where the sermon method is followed, the verses of the Bible are not taken in consecutive order, but one or two verses of a section, usually the opening verses, are taken and are made the subject of a number of short homilies, quoted in the names of various preachers or Agadists. When the subject is exhausted, the next section is taken up. In dealing with the sections, the Palestinian order of sections is followed.[1] To make the sermon more interesting, Halakic questions were propounded at its beginning with the usual formula of "May our master teach us," to which an answer was given, and thus aroused the interest of the hearers, hence the prevalence of that formula in Midrashim based on the sermon method.

Yet, though homiletic Agada is the background of these Midrashic collections, it forms by no means the entire substance of these collections for as explained above (Ch. III, Sect. 53) the homiletic element absorbed all the other elements of the Agada, the historical, ethical, and poetic. In order to illustrate their teachings, the preachers were forced to draw upon all sources of the Agada, historical facts, legendary biography, fables and folk stories, maxims and parables. Hence, it came about that while the Midrashic Agada is primarily homiletic, it contains all forms of literary expressions, and is thus encyclopedic in character, and forms the great store house of the many-colored Jewish lore.

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[1] In the reading of the Law on the Sabbaths, there was a difference between the Babylonians and the Palestinians. The former finished the Pentateuch in one year, and divided the Torah into fifty-four of fifty-three different sections, usually called Parshah, the weekly portion, while the latter finished the Torah in three years, and divided the Pentateuch into one hundred fifty-five sections called Sedorim, orders. It is this division which is usually followed in the Midrashic cycles based on the sermonic method where the subject contained in the beginning of the sections is taken as the theme.

The method used by these Agadists, either in expounding a Biblical verse, or in delivering a homily was an indirect one, namely, the verse was not immediately explained nor the subject of the sermon treated at once but always prefaced by one, two, or three, or more introductions. These introductions or *Petichoth,* as they are technically called, are as a rule based on a verse from the hagiographic writings, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc., or from the prophets, and are in themselves short sermons imparting a certain teaching, thought or moral. Then by comparison, the same teaching or moral is extracted from the verse of the Pentateuch. At times, these introductions present to the reader a kaleidoscopic panorama of various interpretations, thoughts, ethical maxims, and parables, so that the main teaching derived from the text of the day is lost in the maze, but the reader is not the worse for that, as he is amply compensated by the wealth of teaching contained in the introductions proper. At times, the introduction is of a simpler nature, as it may only be a story or a legend, or more usually a Halakic question which supplies the keynote to the sermon. For example, if a preacher wanted to discuss the Sabbath, its sanctity, its holiness, a practical question concerning a point in the observation of the Sabbath is propounded, the answer as a rule is given briefly and then the preacher launches his discourse on the Sabbath, its value, and the merit of its observation, and the reward in store for the observer. Other subjects were similarly treated.

As remarked, the question method of introduction is prevalent in the Tanchuma cycle. The complex homily form of introduction belongs primarily to the Rabba and Pesikta cycles. But as all those books were more or less compilations, and the various kinds of material are not really separated from one another, the compilers of one cycle did not hesitate to borrow whole sections, chapters, and sometimes even the greater parts of books from another cycle. It thus came about that the compilers of the various versions of the Tanchuma borrowed extensively from the older Pesikta, while the compiler of the larger Pesikta, the later compilation, borrowed in turn from the Tanchuma. The compilers of the later Pentateuch, Rabba Midrashim, such as that to Exodus, Numeri, and Deuteronomy, borrowed both from the *Pesikta* and the *Tanchuma* cycles. Thus, the Rabba Midrash to Numeri contains a large part taken from the *Tanchuma-Yelamdenu* cycle. Deuteronomy Rabba is almost ninety percent Tanchuma matter, and all its introductions are of the question type, while the Midrash to Numeri contains such introductions only to a limited extent. There are likewise borrowings from other sources, from earlier Rabba Midrashim, from the Talmud versions, and other books.

On the whole, it would be in vain to search for strictness of division and arrangement both in the books in general, and in each droshah, sermon, or homily in particular. The Agada was not produced in accordance with logical rules and scientific precision. The preacher or the scholar Agadist turned whither the spirit moved him, and took hold of whatever material which was fit for the moment if it only helped to inculcate the message he was delivering in the hearts of the hearers. This Agada represents a gushing fountain, a bubbling well which continues to spurt forth its waters in all directions without system or regulation, but merely from a superabundance of energy which forces it to flow incessantly. Thus, the Agada flowed for half a millennium with the force of emotion out of the depths of Jewish life through the mouths of the sages and scholars, and its living waters quenched thirsty souls and once again fostered new life and vigor in the Jewish people.

86. MIDRASHIC COLLECTIONS TO OTHER BIBLICAL BOOKS

There existed, undoubtedly in older times many Midrashic collections to all prophetic and hagiographic books, but most of them were lost. We have only a few such books. The first is a Midrash to Psalms, a favored Biblical book which is also called *Shochar Tob,* on account of its beginning with the verse "Shocher Tob Yevakesh Rotzon" (Prov. XI, 27). "He that diligently seeketh good, produceth favor." It contains interpretations and short homilies to one hundred forty-three Psalms. It is, of course, a compilation of sayings bearing on the verses of the Psalms scattered throughout the Agada, but contains also some original material. The Midrash to Psalms belongs to the younger Midrashim, but not to the youngest as it was already well known in the eleventh century. It was most likely composed towards the end of the tenth century, and the place of origin probably was Southern Italy. The second is a Midrash to Proverbs which is of a more original nature than the one to the Psalms. It is more in the form of an Agadic commentary on the book, and contains sayings, parables, proverbs, and short homiletic interpretations to each chapter. The author undoubtedly borrowed a good deal of his material, but he fashioned it in his own way. Its date of composition is approximately the same as that of the Midrash on Psalms. The third one is an Agadic compilation to the Book of Samuel. It contains thirty-two chapters of which twenty-four deal with I Samuel and eight with II Samuel. It is not a commentary but a collection of sermons, bearing on subjects which are ultimately connected with the contents of a verse or two in a chapter on Samuel. It usually, in the way of the older Midrashim, begins with the interpretation of a verse from other books which serves as an introduction to the theme. It is of later date, most likely an eleventh century production.

Older authorities mention and even quote short excerpts from Midrashim to Job, Ezrah, Chronicles, and Isaiah, but they seem to have been lost.

87. ETHICAL AGADIC BOOKS

Besides all the Agadic collections which are primarily homiletic we have two books the aim of which is to inculcate to a greater or lesser extent certain ethical teachings and ways of conduct. The first of these is a book known as the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*. It is one of the Apocryphal Agadic books which are ascribed to sages of earlier generations. This one is ascribed to Eliezer, the son of Hyrcanus, the disciple of Johanan, the son of Zakkai, a scholar of the generation succeeding the destruction of the Temple. But, in reality, it is a production of the eighth century C. E. All signs point to that age. The author is acquainted with the homes of the wife and daughters of Mohammed, with the Arabic rule in Palestine, with the building of the Mosque of Omar, and many more things. The book is of a peculiar character, it can not be said to be a strictly ethical book as it contains a good deal of extraneous matters, such as chapters on astronomy, and the calculation of the calendar, many exotic legends, and other things. It is best characterized by calling it an ethical narrative book. The author's aim was to show the people the great ethical value of many episodes of the Bible, their beauty, their meaning in daily life, and this he succeeded in doing by relating them in a quite orderly fashion embellished with many legends and stories, and pointing out the ethical teaching to be deduced from the events.

The book is divided into fifty-four chapters, the first two are introductory telling the story of Rabbi Eliezer, the supposed author of the book; nine chapters are devoted to creation, including several chapters on astronomy and calendar which contain also a description of the luminaries and planets; ten chapters to Adam and his sons. He then takes up Noah and the flood, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the giving of the Law, and the attack of Amalek, and breaks off abruptly with the story of the punishment of Miriam, the sister of Moses.

The ethical lessons are skillfully interwoven with the events, thus in connection with creation, the institution of Sabbath is exalted and its observation enforced; while discussing the banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise, an excursus on Hell and Paradise and the reward of the just and charitable is introduced; when telling of the punishment of Miriam for speaking against her brother, remarks are inserted intending to inculcate the great sin of slander, and so on in numerous cases. The author has a great love for numbers, things are discussed in numerical groups of seven and ten. The book abounds with legends and stories, and although of younger date, the material is old. Parallels to the stories and even to some of its cosmological notions are found in the Apocalyptic books of Jubilees and Enoch. It resembles also the former in an attempt to trace the observance of certain laws and customs to the Patriarchs.

It is written almost in pure Hebrew, and at times, its style waxes poetic, especially when it deals with the coming of the Messiah, to which subject many passages are devoted. It has of late been made accessible to the English by an accurate English rendering.

The second book is a work known under the name of *Seder Eliahu,* or *Tanna Dibe Eliahu,* i.e. the Agadic order of Eliahu or the Studies of Elijah, an ethical-religious work par excellence, a veritable jewel of ethical literature. The name of the author, Elijah, aroused in some pious souls the notion that he is no other than the eternal prophet Elijah, and verily, the sentiments expressed in that book are deserving of Elijah who acts in Jewish story as the typical lover of Israel, the harbinger of good tidings, and the miraculous saviour in time of need. Yet, with the best of intentions, we are compelled to rob the beloved prophet of the glory of writing this excellent work, and assign it to a pious mortal who bore the same name and whose age is definitely known. The book was written according to the testimony of the author himself towards the end of the tenth century, as he himself tells us that more than nine hundred years have passed since the destruction of the Temple. As for the place where the author lived, there exists a division of opinion among earlier scholars, some were inclined to assume Babylonia as the place of his residence, and some Southern Italy. But recent research has established definitely that Elijah or as he is called in the book, Abba Elijah, was a native of Palestine. He did, however, travel through the Orient and visited Babylonia quite frequently.

The book is divided into two parts, one which is known as the large order of Elijah, and the other the smaller (Eliahu Rabba and Eliahu Zutta), the first consisting of thirty-one chapters, and the second of twenty-five. Its nature and character differs from all other Agadic productions, as it does not center around any book or part of a book of the Bible. It is merely a series of moral discourses on the value of certain virtues and the need of their observation. In the course of the discourse, verses are expounded in an Agadic manner, and at times, chapters are interpreted. The three great themes of the book are Torah, Israel, or rather the love of Israel, and righteous social life. The love of the author for the Torah knows no bounds, he does not tire of the subject, he repeatedly turns to it again and again, extolling its worth and recounting its virtues. The study of the Torah alone gives man the desired light. "All precepts which a man can observe," says Elijah, "give only as much light as the flame of a candle, but the Torah lights from one end of the world to the other." [2] Man may have many deficiencies, but none is so grave as ignorance of the Torah, for he who is ignorant of the words of the Torah is real blind, and deaf, and lame.[3] In such and similar sayings did this great preacher inculcate in the hearts of his hearers the passion for study.

But, as great as was his love for the Torah, still greater was his love for Israel. In one place he says, "Some say the Torah precedes everything, but I say Israel takes precedence." [4] His favorite expressions were, "I am the dust under the feet of the children of Israel," or "Master of the world, may I be the atoning sacrifice for Israel (Kapporaton Shel Israel) wherever they may dwell." He, therefore, taught continuously the love for a fellow-Jew and right dealing with each other, emphasizing the great value of moral social conduct. In a characteristic passage, he remarks, "Said God to Israel, what do I require of you? Only that you should love each other, honor and revere one another, and there shall not be found among you any transgression nor violence, nor any ugly acts so that ye shall be without blemish." [5] But his love was not limited to Israel, it extended to all men, and with great zeal, he admonishes to just conduct towards gentiles as towards Jews. "It is the duty of every Jew," he says, "to sanctify the name of God, for it was for this purpose that the Torah was given." Hence, every Jew must be pure from every taint of robbery whether that of a Jew or a gentile. Furthermore, if one steals from a gentile, in the end he will also steal from a Jew. Any injustice done to gentiles is a profanation of the sacred name of God.[6] This is the kind of moral teaching imparted by Abba Elijah and the breadth of spirit pervading the book.

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[2] Elijah Rabba Ch. III.

[3] Ibid. Ch. XXV.

[4] Ibid. Ch. XIV.

[5] Ibid. Ch. XXVIII.

With all his piety, Elijah was no ascetic and taught the joy of life and severely reproves rigorism, saying, "If one despises good and joyful living in this world, it spells bad for him." [7] The virtues inculcated are numerous, and the ethical maxims scattered throughout the book are so many that one would have to reproduce the greater part of the book in quoting them. The author, however, gave us a valuable aid towards the appreciation of the book by giving the gist of the spirit permeating it in a short epigram which reads as follows, "I revere God, Israel, and the Torah through great joy, I rejoice through my reverence, but my love exceeds all." [8] Thus, reverence, joy, and love, these are the characteristics of the high ethical work of the otherwise unknown sage Elijah.

The style of the book is like that of the chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, pure Hebrew, and is tinged with poetry, being full of poetic expressions. It is amply provided with parables and stories which impart to it vividness and a popular air.

88. HISTORICAL AND LEGENDARY AGADIC BOOKS

In addition to all these books, there are quite a number of small books which belong to the class of Agada known as historical, though the name historical is used rather by courtesy. They are in reality, groups of legends and stories concerning Biblical persons as well as post-Biblical sages, embellishments of their lives and deeds. They are all narrative in character, and though of late date contain older fragments of material. Many parallels of these legends and stories are found in the Apocalyptic and Apocryphal books as well as in the historical narratives of the Alexandrian writers. Some may be even Hebrew translations of such books, all of which goes to prove the ancient origin of a part of their material. It is needless to say that they bear the stamp of the time of their collection, the early Mediæval Ages, and as most of these books were compiled either in Palestine or Babylonia, they evince influence of Arabic legendary literature, and many additions were made to the ancient legends from other sources, often non-Jewish.

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid. Ch. XIII.
[8] Ibid. Ch. III.

Of such books, there are several versions of the life of Moses, known as the History of Moses (Dibre ha-Yomim Shel Moshe), a small booklet on the death of Moses (Ptirath Moshe), stories of our Father Abraham (Maase D'Abraham Abinu), Parables of Solomon, stories about his wisdom, stories about Jacob and the wars of his children, Midrash Jonah, a poetical description of his stay in the belly of the fish and his exit from there, and many more. At times, episodes in history are taken as the subject and are embellished, such as the crossing of the Red Sea which is the theme of a little Midrashic book called *Vayosha* (He helped), so named after the first word in Ex. XIV, 30, and likewise are similar events treated.

89. MISCELLANEOUS AGADIC BOOKS

Besides all these books enumerated above, there is quite a considerable number of small Midrashim which as far as their content is concerned, defy all form of classification. They deal with various subjects, some devote themselves to the description of Messianic times, the tribulations preceding the coming of the Messiah, the miracles occurring at the time, the wars of the first Messiah from the House of Ephraim (Moshiach ben Joseph) [9] with the typical arch enemy of Israel, Armilus, and the final coming of the Messiah from the House of David, and other things connected with this great event. Most of these Messianic Midrashim are Apocryphal, and bear names of known persons of Biblical or Talmudic fame as their authors. Thus we have an Agadic story book ascribed to Daniel, and one ascribed to Zerubbabel which tells of Messianic events. A book by the name of "Chapters on the Messiah" goes into these matters with great detail.

Other books deal with different subjects and use different devices. A favorite one is the number device. The authors selected a certain number of things which they take as their subject for homilies.

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[9] According to the Messianic traditions found in Midrashim and also occasionally referred to in the Talmud, there will first arise a man from the tribe of Ephraim, some name him Nehemiah, the son of Amiel, who will bring back a part of the Jews into Palestine. This is the Messiah of the House of Joseph. Against him and the kingdom he will establish, the nations will rise, the leader of which will be a certain Armilus, a one-eyed monster of a man and of peculiar wickedness. In the wars that will ensue, this early Messiah will be killed, and only then the real Messiah will appear and gather all the Jews to Palestine.

Thus we have books known as the "Ten Exiles," the "Ten Commandments," the "Ten Kings." In these, subjects relating to the various exiles of Israel, to the commandments and to the ten great kings who ruled and will rule over the world, the last one being the Messiah, are discussed and interpreted. The numbers seven, three, and four are employed. We have booklets known as "Three and Four," "Seven Canopies" (also known as The Canopy of Elijah), referring to the canopies of honor which God will spread over the heads of the righteous. Some, on the other hand, take a single subject of the Bible for their theme. As an instance, we have a Midrash Temurah, i. e. vicissitude, taking for its text verses 1–10 of Ecclesiastes III where it says, "There is an appointed time for everything," and discussing the vicissitudes of time enumerated therein. Some take the description of Hell and Paradise for their subject. We have a *Masecheth Gan Eden* and a *Masecheth Gehenom,* i. e. tractates on Paradise and Hell. Others again deal with the letters of the Alpha-Beth discussing their meaning and significance. There is a small Midrash called the Alpha-Beth of Rabbi Akiba, which this great sage is supposed to have composed (see below Sect. 178). It is difficult to determine the age and land of all these productions, a number of them belong to the early Mediæval Ages, the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, some were written later. But these differences really affect little their content and character except in small details, as most of the material dates from older sources and it was only a matter of shifting and arrangement.

We can not, however, close our review of the collections of the Agada without mentioning several great collections, which though they belong to a later period, yet, as the authors followed in the footsteps of the former compilers and have also manipulated with the same material, they belong here. These are: First, a large Midrash to Genesis, and probably to other books by Moses Hadarshan, i. e. the preacher of Narbonne, a scholar who lived in the second half of the eleventh century. This Midrash is quoted by earlier Jewish scholars and even by Mediæval Christian savants, but the book itself seems to have been lost. From the nature of the quotations, it seems to have been more in the nature of a Midrashic commentary compiled from older sources, and here and there it contained a modicum of original interpretation. Another one is a Midrash to the whole of the Pentateuch and some of the Scrolls, of Rabbi Tubia, the son of Eliezer, who hailed from Germany, but towards the end of the eleventh century settled in Greece. This Midrash is often quoted as *Lekach Tob,* i. e. good instruction, or the smaller Pesikta. The first name is applied to it because the author manages to preface each section with a verse which contains the word Tob, i. e. good; the second, on account of his method as he interprets the Pentateuch in a sectional and paragraphic way, quoting excerpts to each verse. He drew both on Agadic and Halakic sources, giving both interpretations at the same time. Not all of the Lekach Tob, however, was preserved for we possess only the part to the last three books of the Pentateuch and a short Midrash to Ruth.

Finally, we have, what may be called the largest Agadic compendium to the Bible. This is the Yalkut, i. e. compilation, compiled by Simon Karo, a thirteenth century man. This is a compendium of Agadic statements and interpretation to all the twenty-four books of the Bible. It is a great work, for the compiler had to arrange thousands of sayings scattered in the entire literature, both versions of the Talmud, numerous Midrashim, and many more sources, each in its own place in the Bible, so that as a result it appears as if each book in the Bible has its own Midrash. Rabbi Simon drew upon numerous sources, and some of the works quoted by him are now entirely lost, and he thus performed an additional service for Jewish literature. Karo's work closes the great literary activity known as the Agadic which lasted for a period close to fifteen hundred years.

Book II

MEDIÆVAL PERIOD

DIVISION I

From 600 C. E. to 1200

MEDIÆVAL PERIOD

DIVISION I.

90. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The period of literary activity which forms the subject of the following chapters represents the heyday period of Jewish literature. During the six centuries dealt with, Jewish literature bloomed and flourished, increased both in quantity, and deepened, varied, and ramified in quality. If the literature of the first period can be compared to a tree divided into several trunks directly shooting forth from common roots—the life of the nation, the literature of the second period, pursuing the simile, is to be likened to a mighty tree whose roots have spread in all directions, going forth to many brooks, drawing moisture from all sources and whose many branches extend far and wide to the four sides of the world covering a great area. And as the sources of its nurture vary, so vary its fruits, for though they all resemble the common tree, they often differ in color, shape and taste.

It is this heterogeneity and complexity which form the primal characteristic of the literature. The literature of the first period is comparatively homogeneous, of one color, though of several hues. It is primarily religious and the Bible is the central axis around which everything turns, its application to life, its interpretation, its reconciliation with foreign ideas are both the motives and the problems of the literary expression. In the second period, true the same problems are still there, and the Bible is still of great importance, but the situation is changed. In the domain of practical religion, the Talmud took the place of the Bible and other literary currents flow beside the religious one. The secular element is in great evidence, the world of nature claims its attention and science takes its place beside religion. Nor does beauty both of nature and of man lack a place of prominence in this literature. Poetry expressing the appreciation of beauty in both realms is also cultivated, and many more emotions of the human soul find their expression. Even the problem of reconciling religion to current ideas, assumes a different aspect, a deeper and more earnest tone pervades it, and as a result, we have a real religious philosophy which is not separated from science but is grounded upon its principles. Thus, the kaleidoscopic panorama widens and broadens.

The cause of heterogeneity and complexity in this literature is, of course, its geographic extent which follows from the extension of the Jewish Diaspora. The bulk of literature of the former period arose on the native soil of Palestine where the Jews, even when subjected to the rule of the conqueror, yet led almost a complete national life, and even in the land of the second literary center, Babylonia, that life was, on the whole, quite as complete nationally as in Palestine. In addition, Palestine then held the spiritual hegemony and exercised its influence over it. But the literature of this period is primarily one of the Diaspora. As the centuries pass, Palestine recedes from view, and new centers emerge. At first, Babylonia takes the place of Palestine and for a time exercises sway over the newer Jewish settlements in Southern Europe. Soon, however, its hour strikes and like Palestine, it disappears from the view of history, and other centers appear, each claiming a prominent place in Jewish life and history, though none ever took the place of Palestine or Babylonia. There is Northern Africa, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, and later Poland and Lithuania in Eastern Europe. Each of these contributed their quota to Jewish literature and brought forth its current to swell that great spiritual ocean.

The currents, though, were different in the same measure that the modes of Jewish life in those centers which engendered them were different. No more did one center possess spiritual hegemony but each one led its own life. There was, of course, harmony and coördination among them but no subordination. As a result, therefore, Jewish life in each center varied from that in the other, being subjected to the influence of the general life of the country and modified by it, and this influence is reflected in the literary productions, changing their nature and character. The fact that Jewish literature, in the Mediæval period, has the world for its stage, imparts to it a peculiar character, the like of which is not found in any other literature. The constant interaction between Judaism and the cultures it came in contact with, in the course of its history, gave to its literature that checkered appearance which not only affected the medium of its expression, namely, that it used many languages instead of one, but its very substance and character.

Yet there was unity in Jewish life in the Diaspora as well as diversity. Mediæval life in general was of a cosmopolitan character and was impressed with a certain unity of type. Nationalism, the great dividing factor of humanity was unknown and life bore the unity of religion, one religion, one type of life. In Christian Europe, life in France, for instance, differed but little in many aspects from that in England or Germany, and as far as the upper stratum of the population is concerned, its life differed only in a small degree even from life in distant Poland. And as for literature, it had a universal language—Latin, which in turn helped to unify life. A similar situation reigned in all Mohammedan countries, life there was also cosmopolitan, one religion and one language—Arabic. The only line of division that did bar one people from another was the political rule or government, and as these were not constant, and countries frequently changed hands, the unity of life was increased by these frequent vicissitudes.

Under such circumstances, it was also possible for Jewish life in various countries to maintain a unity of type and in spite of the slight diversity that existed in the types of the life of the various Jewries, it presents on the whole a uniform character. As a result, the literary activity going on in different countries was conducted on similar lines. There was, however, one line of cleavage in the Jewish life in the Mediæval period which corresponded with the same line in general life and that is the difference in the types of culture of Mediæval Christianity, on the one hand, and that of Islam on the other. This line of cleavage which was marked enough in the general world, inasmuch as the Mohammedan countries were at the time the seat of enlightened culture, was still more accentuated in the Jewish world. For, in addition to the influence of general culture upon Jewish life, there enters also another factor in consideration, and that is the treatment the Jews were accorded by the respective Christian and Mohammedan governments.

As it is well known, the Jews fared well in Mohammedan countries, where they were not only unmolested, but even attained prominence and wealth, while in Christian countries, their life was a bitter struggle for existence and a continuous agony of suffering. This great difference in the daily life of the two groups of Jewries, was, of course, reflected in their literary productions. And if we draw a line across Europe touching the foothills of the Pyrenees on the one hand, and that of the Appenines on the other, it represents the line of division between two types of Jewish literary activity. In all countries south and east of that line, Jewish literature bears a brighter color and a broader and more ramified aspect, while in those to the north and the west, it is of narrower dimension, of sterner character and gloomier aspect, though at times more intensely Jewish. In the former, where Jewish life was freer and came into closer contact with the high type of the general culture, grammar, Bible Exegesis, philosophy, and other subjects of a more secular nature took their place by the side of Halakah and other religious subjects. In the latter, Halakah and its further development, i. e. the study of the Talmud interpretation, and application of the law to daily life, together with the cultivation of pious ethical literature as well as liturgical poetry constitute the chief literary productions.

Of course, the lines are not fast drawn. There were many great Talmudic scholars, whose works in Halakah became the standard guide to students of succeeding ages, who lived and acted in Mohammedan countries, while there were great commentators of the Bible and even grammarians in Christian countries. The unity of Jewish life helped to obliterate the lines of demarcation. Literary activity in one part of world Jewry in a certain direction, stirred up similar activity in the other part. There was much interchange of ideas and mutual influence, but on the whole the general distinction between the two types of the literary productivity in the two geographical areas holds true.

There is also a distinction of language in these two types. The Jews of the Mohammedan countries employed to a great extent the language of the country in their writings and a large part of Jewish literature in those lands was written in Arabic, while the Jews of Christian countries wrote as a rule in Hebrew. As a result, many of the writings of the former were lost, while those of the latter were preserved almost in entirety.

Besides the heterogeneity and complexity of this great mass of literature of the period, there is to be noted another important characteristic and that is individuality. The literature of the first period is, as indicated, of a national character, and is as a whole, a mass production. That of this period is entirely individual with few exceptions such as the Masorah and other works which really belong largely to the first period. In it, each production bears the stamp and the impress of its author, and thus we possess more variety of type and character.

A third characteristic of the literature is, at least as far as the first division is concerned, its closeness to life and its influence on life. In no other period of Jewish history were life and literature so closely harmonious as in the epoch of the Golden Age in Spain. There, we meet with writers who wrote with one hand heavy treatises on Halakah discussing the minutiæ of law, and with the other, works on philosophy or even poems on beauty of nature and men. Life in all currents and phases pulsates in that literature, and there are in it only slight traces of the isolation of religion from life so marked in the later days. It is no wonder then, that in turn it influenced life. Even in Western Europe there was proximity between the Jewish literature and the type of life prevailing there in the first half of the Mediæval period, and its influence on life was exceedingly great, even to a degree that it actually molded and shaped it in its impress and form. That exceptions and digressions abound goes without saying.

It is impossible to describe in a minute and accurate manner the character of this great literature of such a varied nature. We have only endeavored to give some of its leading characteristics. As for the rest, we will have to deduce them from the unfolding picture of its history.

Chapter VII

GRAMMAR AND LEXICOGRAPHY

91. THE MASORAH

The first remarkable phenomenon, which we note at the opening of this period of literary activity, is the revival of Hebrew as the medium of literature, and, what goes together with it, increased interest in the language which ultimately brought to the scientific study of its structure, the development of its grammar, and systematic lexigraphical activity. This revival opened up a path for literature, for poetic expression, for fine and elegant writing, and raised Hebrew to a first-class literary language. The phenomenon is made more remarkable by the facts that it appeared in Palestine at a time when Jewish life there was at an ebb, and the glory was about to depart from the Motherland for a long time, and further, that it reached its climax in the lands of the Goluth-Diaspora.

For centuries, from the close of the Mishnah on, Hebrew ceased to be a medium of literary expression, and the mixed Aramaic took its place. The Talmuds, both the Palestinian and the Babylonian, are written in its different dialects, the earlier Midrashic collections employ this language. But suddenly, there is revealed before us the use of a beautiful Hebrew style in many literary works. The younger Midrashim, such as the Tanchuma and others, use a good deal of Hebrew, and even go to the trouble of translating Aramaic proverbs into Hebrew. The later Agadic productions such as the chapters of Rabbi Eliezer and others are written in pure Hebrew. This is followed immediately by the first outbursts of Hebrew religious poetry in Palestine. Together with the change of style, we note a deep interest in the Bible, resulting in the standardization of its text, accents and vowel points are invented, and, here and there, books begin to appear where grammatical rules are mentioned, and the movement continued to grow until Hebrew broke into real bloom, reaching its height in the literature of the Golden Age in Spain.

A veil of darkness is spread over the beginnings of this revival. It may be surmised that an impetus was given to it, as to many other movements, by the contact of the Jews with the Arabic culture, though that may not be the only cause.

The conquest of Palestine by the Arabs in 638 and of Babylonia in 642 brought the Jews of the two centers in contact with the young rising nation which was soon destined to become a great factor in the history of civilization and culture. The Arab has been a great lover of poetry and fine writing from time immemorial and poetry had been his chief spiritual staple for many centuries. This poetry was usually handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation, but when the Arabs after Mohammed became a literary people, written poetry began to flourish. Closely associated with poetry is the science of language which developed along with it. Many grammarians arose who displayed great skill in their work and wrote grammars and dictionaries.

This cultural movement among the masters and neighbors of the Jews evoked a similar movement among them and rekindled the love for their ancient language and called forth a desire to sound its depths and to ransack its treasures. But before such work could be carried on in a systematic way, before any structure of rules could be erected, some great preliminary work had to be done. The Hebrew language is embodied in the Bible and any work which tends to develop that language must begin with that great Book itself. It was, therefore, necessary first of all, to have a standard text of that Book, a correct division of its verses, a very correct reading of all its words, and many more things connected with a book which embodies the treasures of a language. In order to standardize the very correct reading of all the words of the Bible a system of vowels was necessary, and in addition, accents and signs of punctuation which should mark the division of the verses were needed. All this stupendous work was done by schools of scholars known as Masorites, i. e. traducers, and their chief work known as Masorah, i. e. tradition.

The Masorah is really not a work of one generation or one school. It is only the standardization and canonization of this work which belongs to this period, but the work itself went on for generations previous to that. The Bible, as we know, was the center of Jewish life through the ages; it is evident therefore, that the guarding of its text, the preserving of the form of the correct reading of the words, or the divisions of chapters and verses was also the concern of some scholars who specialized in this particular branch. These scholars were known as *Sopherim,* more in the literal sense, actual scribes who wrote the books of the Bible. The Talmud interprets this appellation as given to them, because they actually counted the number of letters in the Bible. These same scholars were also readers of the Torah in the synagogues and were called readers (Kara). As such, the correct pronunciation was their special task. It is almost definitely established that vowels and accents were not known during the Talmudic period, and the art of reading was a matter of tradition. Likewise were the Bibles written without division into chapters and verses, the stopping at the proper places was also considered an art and was taught by special men. There were also a number of differences between the written text and the traditional reading. These differences are known as Ketib and Keri, i. e. the way the word is written and the way it is to be read. These differences were again made a subject of study, for the text was not changed and the words continued to be written one way and read another way. Changes were also introduced, a limited number, eighteen in all, in the text to avoid improper expression concerning God. These are called the corrections of the Sopherim (tikkune sopherim). Whole words were at times substituted in reading for the obsolete words. All these changes were noted and memorized and orally traduced by one generation of scribes to the other.

But memory, even at the best, is an unreliable guide and a time must come when it is to be exchanged for the written word. When the age of great compilations arrived, that of the redaction of the Talmuds and collection of Agada, the time also came for all these traditions about the text of the Bible to be standardized and definitely fixed and written down. Then, the real work of the Masorites began.

We cannot definitely determine the year of its beginning, but it most likely began during the sixth century, and was carried on both in Palestine, mainly at Tiberias, and at Babylonia. Both Academies, there, Sura and Pumbedita, had their schools of Masorites. The first work of the Masorites was to purify the text of the Bible from all possible errors which crept in by copyists and hand down to posterity an authentic absolutely correct text. This text is known as the Masoretic text which is the text of the Hebrew Bible as it is known through the centuries. In order to accomplish this purpose and to guard further possible errors by scribes, lists were compiled of all the differences between words written one way and read another (Ketib and Keri), both forms were given there, other lists noting how many times certain words are written plena, i. e. with "Vav" or "Yod" where these letters are only signs for vowels, and how many times they are written without "Vav" or "Yod" were also prepared. Likewise lists were compiled noting how many times certain words take the Vav conjunctive or the Vav conversive, and how many times they do not take. In this way and many others, the text was standardized. The work of the Masorah seemed to have been carried on in two different methods, by notes on the margins of copies of the Bible, and by separate treatises containing such lists of words and their mode of writing arranged in alphabetical order. In making their notes, the Masorites gave references to the verses where the words were found, and that the references could easily be remembered they used mnemonic signs in the form of sentences, each word of which is taken from the various verses referred to. Of such separate treatises, we have one named *Okhlah V'okhla,* so named because it begins with a short list of the number of times the word Okhla occurs in the Bible without Vav conjunctive and with one. The work contains a large number of lists of words found in the Bible with prefixes and without prefixes.

In general, the work of the Masorah while it is more of a mechanical nature and does not presuppose grammatical rules, it does presuppose division of verses, and these in turn, in written work, must have some signs for separation. These had to be invented. Nor could the purpose of the Masorah be carried out without vowels, signs, or accents for pause and joining, for otherwise the correct reading would have remained a matter of memory and ultimately the text would have been again corrupted. The Masorites could, therefore, not have completed their work without attending to all these matters. And this brings us to vowels and accents.

92. *VOWELS AND ACCENTS*

History is silent regarding the date when our vowel signs were invented and introduced into use. But as said it seems to be the work of the Masorites in their effort to standardize the Hebrew text. It seems, however, that there was a gradual evolution in the establishing of that system. At first, some accents and marks of punctuation were invented. These were necessary as without them no division of verses could be indicated and the traditional division could not have been handed down to posterity. In fact, reference to the punctuation signs known as *Sof Posuk* and *Ethnachto* corresponding to period and colon is found in a small treatise Sopherim, dealing with the writing of the Torah, appended to the Talmud.

Together with the first simple punctuation marks there were used undoubtedly some other marks for reading of a very simple nature, such as points above or below the letters and a point within the letter known as dagesh, indicating the doubling of certain letters. These preceded the more evolved vowel system.

Later, during the middle of the seventh century when the influence of the Arabic language began to be felt, the system was completed, probably following the fashion of the Arabic and the Syriac both of which use three vowel signs. Yet it served only as an impetus for there is no direct borrowing. The Hebrew vowel system is more developed than either the Arabic or the Syriac, as it contains more sounds.

The work of the Masorah, as said, was going on simultaneously in Palestine and Babylonia. We, therefore, find that two vowel systems were likewise invented and used. One is the Babylonian called the Assyrian, and the other the Palestinian, or the Tiberian, the one now in use. The Babylonian vowel system seemed to be the older one. In it, contrary to the Tiberian, the vowel signs are placed above the letters and the signs are simpler. It is probable that the Babylonian system was brought over to Tiberias where there was a great Masoretic school, and there it was changed to the form we use. In time, the authority of the Tiberian Masorites prevailed and their system was adopted while the other was entirely forgotten, and was only discovered in the nineteenth century in certain old manuscripts.[1]

In the Tiberian system, the vowels as known are placed under the letters with the exception of the "oi" and the "oo," which are placed above and in the middle of the letter respectively. It contains seven vowel sounds, o, ä, ā, ĕ, ĭ, oi, oo, and the signs are more elaborate than in the Babylonian.[2] The Babylonian, besides, contains only six sounds, no provision is made for the ĕ sound. The present system which distinguishes three more vowel sounds, adding the shorter ĭ, the short ŏ, and the short ŭ, is of later origin and dates from the grammarian Joseph Kimchi (twelfth century).

Along with the perfection of the vowel system, there went on the perfection of the punctuation or accent system. There is quite an elaborate system of punctuation marks. In the adapted system which is the Tiberian, there are twenty-six signs, eighteen of them serve as signs of pause (mafsickim), and eight as signs of conjunction, namely, they join words together according to sense. Because of their function of joining words together, namely, to the word which bears the sign of a pause, they were nicknamed by grammarians *servants,* as they serve the sign of the pause. The eighteen pause signs are further divided into classes according to the degree of pause they indicate and were given fancy names, such as kings, viceroys, adjutants, and officers. The three Biblical books, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, were for some reason provided with a different system of accents. These signs also serve as notes in reading the Bible. The Bible in olden times was read with a certain chant, and this chant has been preserved by tradition and embodied by the Masorites in these signs. Each sign has also a peculiar tone inflection and note, hence, their name of accents as well as punctuation signs. In accentuation as well as in the introduction of vowel marks, there is a double system, the other one is the Babylonian which like the vowel system was slowly forgotten when the Tiberian became the adopted one. In that system, there is the same simplicity as in the vowels inasmuch as the accents are fewer.

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[1] On this subject see S. Pinsker: Introduction to Assyrian Vowel System.

[2] The vowel sounds given in the text represents the German or Ashkenazic pronunciation which is the more prevalent one among the Jews. The sephardic pronunciation, which is considered the scientific one, is represented by the following vowel sounds ā (long), ä (short), ē (long), ĕ (short), ĭ, o, oo.

The value of the accent system for the development of the Hebrew language cannot be overestimated, for not only does it facilitate the reading and stabilize the whole vowel system and its possible changes, but it contributed greatly to the exegesis of the Bible, inasmuch as it supplies the proper connection as well as the separation of the words in the verses of the Bible, and thus elucidates the meaning of the content. The Masorites who introduced the system of accents were great Biblical scholars and by their work, they laid the very foundation of Biblical exegesis as it really forms a running commentary.

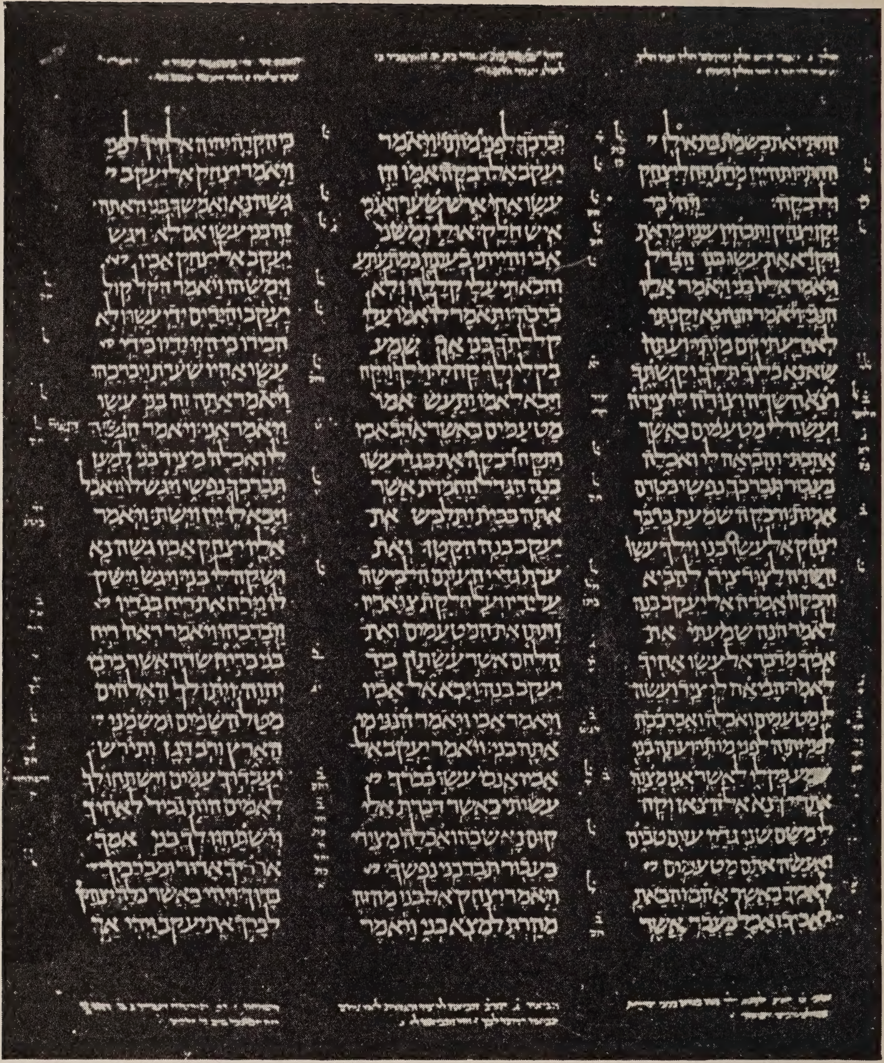
After the vowel signs and accents were introduced, the Masorah notes were revised to include remarks on vowel pointing and accentuation of words, especially on exceptional accentuations of vocalized letters in certain words. In the special Masoretic treatises, there were added new lists in alphabetical arrangement enumerating peculiarly pointed and accented words, or those that take a certain accent and all other deviations. In general, we note in the Masorah certain strata in regard to the vowel points. Some parts of it mention only the names of two vowel signs, i. e. the Kametz (O) and Patach (A), the others are designated by placing the points above or below the letters Alef, Vav, and Yod. In other parts, especially in the separate treatises, the names of all the vowel signs are stated. This only supports the view often propounded that the standardization of the vowel system as well as the Masorah itself took some considerable time.

93. PERIOD OF MASORETIC WORK

As it was stated, we cannot determine with accuracy the beginning of the period of activity in the field of the Masorah, and likewise we cannot state with any definiteness the close of that period. All that we assert about the extent of that period is that it lasted several centuries, and that by the beginning of the tenth century, it was considered an accomplished work.

Of course, this rather indefinite time limit refers only to the standardization, namely, to the written Masorah, but as far as the oral Masorah work is concerned, it goes back to early Talmudic times. Some traditions speak of a certain Nakki, a contemporary of Simon Ben Yochai, a Tanna of the second century, that he came to Babylonia and established a Masoretic school. The same tradition quotes also a few more Masorites who continued their work there during the Talmudic period. It is interesting, however, that while tradition knows of a few names of the early Masorites in Babylonia, it did not preserve any names of Palestinian Masorites in the early days. Yet, it is the Tiberian school that really put its impress on the Masorah, for in spite of the fact that great activity was going on in the Masoretic schools in Babylonia, both in the earlier and later period, it is the Palestinian system that really was adopted and Palestine even in its less glorious days conquered the Diaspora.

Of the later school of the Masorites in Palestine, we have the names of a few of its leaders. First, Phineas, the head of the Academy (Pinchas Rosh Yeshiva) who lived in the middle of the eighth century in Palestine, who is often referred to in Masoretic literature. Towards the close of that century, there flourished in Tiberias, Asher, the elder, who was the founder of the Asher family which devoted itself to Masoretic work through six generations. The last member of this family was Aaron ben Asher who lived at the beginning of the tenth century and who seemed to have closed the Masoretic work, as the Bible which he provided with vowel points, accents and Masoretic notes was preserved by generations and was the very one which Maimonides took as the authoritative model



החתי ואת בשמת בת אילן ה
חתי ותהיין מרת רוח ליצחק
ולרבקה ויהי כי
זקן יצחק ותכהין עיניו מראת
ויקרא את עשו בנו הגדל
ויאמר אליו בני ויאמר אליו
הנני ויאמר הנה נא זקנתי
לא ידעתי יום מותי ועתה
שא נא כליך תליך וקשתך
וצא השדה וצודה לי צידה
ועשה לי מטעמים כאשר
אהבתי והביאה לי ואכלה
בעבור תברכך נפשי בטרם
אמות ורבקה שמעת בדבר
יצחק אל עשו בנו וילך עשו
השדה לצוד ציד להביא
ורבקה אמרה אל יעקב בנה
לאמר הנה שמעתי את
אביך מדבר אל עשו אחיך
לאמר הביאה לי ציד ועשה
לי מטעמים ואכלה ואברככה
לפני יהוה לפני מותי ועתה בני
שמע בקלי לאשר אני מצוה
אתך לך נא אל הצאן וקח
לי משם שני גדיי עזים טבים
ואעשה אתם מטעמים ל
אביך כאשר אהב והבאת
לאביך ואכל בעבור אשר

יברכך לפני מותו ויאמר
יעקב אל רבקה אמו הן
עשו אחי איש שער ואנכי
איש חלק אולי ימשני
אבי והייתי בעיניו כמתעתע
והבאתי עלי קללה ולא
ברכה ותאמר לו אמו עלי
קללתך בני אך שמע
בקלי ולך קח לי וילך ויקח
ויבא לאמו ותעש אמו
מטעמים כאשר אהב אביו
ותקח רבקה את בגדי עשו
בנה הגדל החמדת אשר
אתה בבית ותלבש את
יעקב בנה הקטן ואת
ערת גדיי העזים הלבישה
על ידיו ועל חלקת צואריו
ותתן את המטעמים ואת
הלחם אשר עשתה ביד
יעקב בנה ויבא אל אביו
ויאמר אבי ויאמר הנני מי
אתה בני ויאמר יעקב אל
אביו אנכי עשו בכרך
עשיתי כאשר דברת אלי
קום נא שבה ואכלה מצידי
בעבור תברכני נפשך
ויאמר יצחק אל בנו מה זה
מהרת למצא בני ויאמר

כי הקרה יהוה אלהיך לפני
ויאמר יצחק אל יעקב
גשה נא ואמשך בני האתה
זה בני עשו אם לא ויגש
יעקב אל יצחק אביו וי
ימשהו ויאמר הקל קול
יעקב והידים ידי עשו ולא
הכירו כי היו ידיו כידי
עשו אחיו שערת ויברכהו
ויאמר אתה זה בני עשו
ויאמר אני ויאמר הגשה
לי ואכלה מציד בני למען
תברכך נפשי ויגש לו ויאכל
ויבא לו יין וישת ויאמר
אליו יצחק אביו גשה נא
ושקה לי בני ויגש וישק
לו וירח את ריח בגדיו וי
ברכהו ויאמר ראה ריח
בני כריח שדה אשר ברכו
יהוה ויתן לך האלהים
מטל השמים ומשמני
הארץ ורב דגן ותירש
יעבדוך עמים וישתחו לך
לאמים הוה גביר לאחיך
וישתחוו לך בני אמך
ארריך ארור ומברכיך
ברוך ויהי כאשר כלה יצחק
לברך את יעקב ויהי אך

Facsimile of a page of the Codex assigned to Ben-Asher in Aleppo.

in formulating the rules, in his code, about vowel pointing and accentuation of Biblical books. This Aaron ben Asher also wrote a book on the accents.

Of the Babylonian later Masorites, only one name is preserved and that is ben Naftali whose Masoretic notes differ considerably from that of ben Asher. They especially differ in the Keri and Ketib, i. e. which words are written differently than they are read, as well as in the writing of words plena or defectiva, namely with a Vav or a Yod or without them. The difference between these two men represents the Masoretic difference between the two schools, Babylonian and Palestinian, otherwise known as the Easterners and the Westerners respectively.

The printed Bible was first provided with Masoretic notes in the Venice edition published by Bomberg in 1525. The work was done by Jacob ben Chaim, an Italian scholar who copied these notes from various manuscripts. There are two kinds of notes, one known as the small Masorah (Masora Parva) and the other as the larger one (Masora Magna). The first is printed on the outside margin of the text, the second, above or below, or on the inner margin of the text. The smaller one gives only the number of times the word with its peculiar spelling or punctuation is found in the Bible. The larger one gives the references with mnemonic devices for remembering them. In addition, there is also a *Masora Finalis,* namely, at the end of the book alphabetical lists of words are given where these peculiarities are noted. In our time, several editions of the large Masorah were published in a separate book from manuscripts.

GRAMMAR AND LEXICOGRAPHY

94. EARLY EFFORTS IN THE FIELD OF GRAMMAR AND LEXICOGRAPHY

After the groundwork in the field in Hebrew philology was laid by the activity of the Masorites, the very building began slowly to rise. Many were those who contributed to the edifice of grammar and lexicography which was constructed through several centuries. The first workers in the field only contributed some stones to the structure, those that followed them have done more and actually laid layer upon layer. The first attempt to formulate some grammatical rules was made by the anonymous author of the mystical book known as the Book of Creation (Sepher Yetzira). The book itself is primarily a treatise upon the mystic powers of the letters of the Hebrew Alpha-Beth, and is one of the early Kabbalistic works (see Sect. 180), but indirectly, we find there the first classification of the letters according to the organs of speech from which they issue. This classification was adopted by all the succeeding grammarians. The author was most likely a Palestinian who lived in the middle of the seventh century.

A more definite attempt at formulating rules of grammar was made by the last Masorite, Aaron ben Asher. He was the author of a book in Hebrew on the accents (dikduke ha-Teomim) where he also deals with grammar. As a Masorite and one who was interested primarily in the vowel pointing, he deals primarily with the grammatical part of the vowels and the placing of the dagesh, i. e. the stronger and the weaker pronunciation of letters. But he also attempted to classify the parts of speech into nouns, numerals, verbs, pronouns and adjectives. He also foresaw the distinction of the prefixes and suffixes from the letters of the roots, but he did not enunciate it clearly. This was left for some one else. Ben Asher, was, of course, influenced by the Arabic grammarians. Ben Asher's work seemed to have been the last contribution of Palestine towards the study of the Hebrew language, conditions made work in this field impossible. The foremost place in Jewish literature belongs henceforth to Babylonia.

There the Arabic culture, which, during its heyday period in the East, from the seventh to the eleventh centuries, made great strides in all branches of knowledge, strongly influenced the Jews, and called forth similar activities in their own literature. An additional impetus toward the study of Hebrew language was the Karaite schism (see Ch. XIII). This sect which renounced all oral tradition and the authority of the Talmud reverted to the Bible only. They thus fell back upon an intensive study of the Bible and its language in order to refute the Rabbinic interpretation and deduce their own. This forced also the Rabbinic scholars to do likewise and devote themselves to similar studies in order to defend the Talmudic interpretation of the Bible. In time, these studies which at first might have been a means for something else became an end in themselves. Thus, began a period of flourishing literary activity, the exponent of which is the Gaon Saadia.

95. *SAADIA*

Saadia ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi, who left an indelible impress upon Jewish literature in all its branches and whom we will meet again and again in the course of our story, was born in the year 892 in the village of Dilaz in the district of Fayyum in Egypt. His father was of an humble vocation, but that did not prevent him from giving his son an excellent education. We know very little of his youth, when he is revealed to us, he is already a full-fledged scholar. But Egypt must have been, at the time, a center of learning and young Saadia must have had great teachers both in Rabbinics and other studies, we, though, know only one, a certain Abu-Kathir of Tiberias, a grammarian and philosopher. However, Saadia's study under him really belongs to a later period in his life. While yet a young man, he began to write books in the field of Hebrew lexicography and grammar. In 915 C. E., at the age of twenty-three, Saadia left Egypt and went on his journeys. He lived for a time in Palestine, from there went to Babylonia, then to Aleppo in Syria and back to Babylonia. All the while he kept on writing and his fame grew daily. He especially distinguished himself in his controversy with a Palestinian scholar, ben Meir, about the Jewish calendar in which he defended the position of the Babylonian Gaonim.

In 928, at the age of thirty-six, he was appointed by the Exilarch David, son of Zakkai, to the Gaonate of Sura, i. e. to be the head of the famous Academy, a great distinction conferred upon a young man who was a foreigner. But there his troubles began, Saadia's honest nature could not tolerate many of the deeds of the Exilarch and a quarrel broke out between the two. The struggle between these two powerful men was a bitter one which caused much anxiety to both parties. During the strife, Saadia was deposed and suffered greatly. Finally, a reconciliation was effected and Saadia spent his last few years in peace. He died in 942 at the age of fifty.

Saadia's life, though short, was but one long chain of continuous literary activity, and it is almost miraculous for one man to accomplish so much, in such a short span of life. There is not a branch of Jewish study where he did not take the leading part, and of course, grammar and lexicography not excepted.

His first work in that field was the *Agron,* a Hebrew dictionary in two parts. In the first part, the words were arranged in alphabetical order according to their initials, in the second, according to the final letters. The book was primarily intended to help the poets in their work of making rhymes. It was further provided with a Hebrew introduction where the history of the Hebrew language was given. The first edition was written by him at the age of twenty, later he issued a second and enlarged edition with an Arabic translation of the words and an Arabic introduction. Only the introductions and a portion of the dictionary remained, the rest is lost.

As no dictionary can be composed on scientific principles without recognizing the fact that words have roots and suffixes, Saadia enunciates clearly this fundamental principle in his introduction, and divides the letters of the alphabet into two classes, eleven which can be used both as roots as well as suffix or prefix letters, and the other eleven which are root letters only. He elaborates there also other grammatical rules.

He was, however, not satisfied with these remarks, but wrote a large book in twelve parts under the name of the *Book of the Language* (Sepher ha-Loshon). The book was written in Arabic, and constitutes the first grammar of the Hebrew language. Each part deals with a special phase, as for instance, part one deals with the combination of letters into words and roots; part two with the letters; other parts treat of the assimilation and interchange of letters and suffixes where the above theory is discussed in detail. He also deals with the conjugation of the verb, and seemed to have elaborated the first schematic table of a conjugation though it was far from complete. Saadia, thus, practically erected the walls of the Hebrew grammar.

He also wrote a third work in Lexicography which is a list of ninety words, i. e. which are found in the Bible either once or otherwise seldom. He not only gives the references where the words are found, but also explains them according to the meaning of kindred words in Mishnah and Talmud. He, thus, showed the closer relation between Biblical Hebrew and the language of the Mishnah and the Talmud as well as Aramaic. This little work is preserved in its entirety. Besides the special books, many grammatical and lexicographical materials are scattered in his commentary to the Book of Creation (Sepher Yetzira) and his commentaries to the Bible (see Ch. VIII).

96. JUDAH IBN KOREISCH, AND DUNASH BEN TAMIN

The contact of the Jews with Arabic culture aroused literary activity in all Jewish centers and Northern Africa, a rising center at the time, was not excepted. From there hails one of the early grammarians and lexicographers by the name of Judah Ibn Koreisch (about 900). His great contribution to Hebrew philology is not so much in the field of grammar as in the study of Hebrew words in comparison with the other Semitic languages, namely, the Aramaic and the Arabic. He was the first one to initiate comparative philology. His work "The Book of Relationship" (Sepher ha-Yachas) to which is appended his letter to the community of Fez urging them to study the Targum, for the purpose of a better understanding of Hebrew, was divided into three parts, the first two containing lists of Hebrew words which have Aramaic affinities, while the third was devoted to those words which are related to the Arabic. It seems that he also wrote a larger dictionary which was lost, and only a half of the first book is preserved. Many grammatical rules are given in his work on Relationships and also references from Mishnah and Talmud where the Biblical words are used in similar meanings. The references show an extensive acquaintance with Rabbinic literature, a fact which explodes the theory that Ibn Koreisch was a Karaite.

Dunash ben Tamin (900–960) of Kairwan was another North African worker in the field of comparative study of language. He was a physician by profession, a pupil of the famous Isaac Israeli (see Sect. 106) but like all Jewish scholars of his day also devoted himself to the study of Hebrew. He wrote a book in Arabic where he endeavored to demonstrate the close relationship between Hebrew and Arabic, and even maintained that Hebrew is only a purer form of Arabic.

97. *MENAHEM BEN SARUK*

Spain, which about the middle of the tenth century became a center of Jewish learning, soon rose to a prominent position as a seat of Jewish literature, and for a long time it held that position compared with which other countries dwindle into insignificance. There, as well as in other centers, the Golden Age of Jewish literature began with the study of the Hebrew language, and the first worker in that field was Menahem ben Saruk. Menahem was born in the year 910 at Tortosa, Southern Spain, and distinguished himself as a master of Hebrew. His fame reached the ears of Hasdai Ibn Saprut, the Vizier of the Caliph Abdul-Rahman at Cordova, who being a patron of learning took him into his house and made him his secretary. During the years when Menahem enjoyed the patronage of Hasdai he produced his literary work which entitles him to a place in the history of Jewish literature. But his peaceful days did not last long; through the intrigues of his contemporary, Dunash ben Labrat, poet and grammarian (Sect. 96), he fell into disfavor with Hasdai and the latter not only ceased supporting him, but even arrested him on some charge. Menahem then wrote a letter in masterful Hebrew to Hasdai where he reproaches him for persecuting him. He was released, but it seems that he was never restored to his former position. He died in 970.

Menahem's great work in the field of grammar and lexicography is his Hebrew dictionary called *Machbereth* (literally a joining of words). This dictionary is the first lexicographical work in Hebrew which covered the entire field of the Biblical language. Previous attempts were not as exhaustive and were incomplete. The dictionary is prefaced with a long introduction where he states his views on Hebrew grammar. He, like Saadia, whose works he saw and used, divides the alphabet into two classes, one including the letters which are used as root letters only, and the other those which are used both as root letters and prefixes and suffixes, and devotes considerable discussion to the distinction between roots and added letters. He believed that the number of letters in the roots of words is variable, from one to five. There are roots of five letters, of four, three, two, and even of one. Menahem contributed greatly towards the theory of the derivation of nouns from verbs, and explained it quite extensively. He also enriched the Hebrew grammatical terminology by few terms, among which is the term *Medakdek* for Grammarian which assumes, of course, the name Dikduk, the adopted one, for grammar. The dictionary proper contributed greatly towards the root fixation of words as well as their explanation. In his explanation of words he made use of the Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew. The book has also great exegetic value, but of that later. Menahem's work because it was written in Hebrew exerted great influence upon Jewish literature, for it was the only book that was accessible to the scholars of France and Germany and they made great use of it for centuries.

98. DUNASH BEN LABRAT

The other great grammarian of the day was Rabbi Adomin Halevy or Dunash ben Labrat (920–970). He was born in Bagdad where he sat in his youth at the feet of Saadia. Later, he lived for a time in Fez, Northern Africa, but ultimately settled in Cordova where, like Menahem, he was the recipient of many favors from Hasdai Ibn Shaprut.

His grammatical views are contained in his polemical works against Menahem and Saadia. His review of Menahem's dictionary, called the *Responsa of Dunash* (Teshuboth), is the most important one and is written in the form of a long metrical poem, the first grammatical, lexicographical poem in Hebrew literature. In it, besides correcting one hundred and sixty errors of Menahem in the explanation of words as well as their derivation, he made an important contribution both to the theory of grammar and to its terminology. He was the first to distinguish between transitive and intransitive verbs, to call the letters of the roots by the names of the letters of the word Poal, to do, namely, the first letter *Pe,* the second *Aen,* the third *Lamed.* He further divided the verb forms into lighter and heavier ones, or weaker and stronger, and distinguished the *Piel* form, whereas Saadia did not know of it; he also enunciated the three parts of speech, i. e. noun, verb and other words including adverbs and prepositions. In his criticism of Saadia, he makes the important contribution of distinguishing between strong and weak verbs, namely, those that have three consonants for their root which are called whole (Shelemim) and those which have as one of their root letters, either as Aleph, He, Vav, or Yod, which drop out at times in conjugation. Dunash intended to write a complete Hebrew grammar for which he gives an elaborate program, but he never carried out his intention. His activity was not, however, limited to the field of grammar and lexicography, and we will have the occasion to speak of his great services to the cause of Hebrew poetry.

99. THE DISCIPLES OF MENAHEM AND DUNASH AND THEIR CONTROVERSY

The attack of Dunash on Menahem's dictionary aroused great interest in learned circles. They were soon divided into two camps, but Menahem's camp seemed to be the more numerous. Three of his pupils, Isaac Ibn Sikatilia, Ibn Kapron and Judah Ibn Daud Chayuj, published a rejoinder against Dunash's criticism under the name Teshuboth, i. e. rejoinder. Though all the three participated in the writing of the book, only one speaks and the form is singular. The book is prefaced by a poetical introduction, one part of which is a dedication to Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, and the other a general critique of Dunash. This is followed by a prose introduction and an attack on Dunash for an attempt to apply the Arabic meter to Hebrew verse. After these preliminary remarks the writer or the writers discuss the particular articles of Menahem's dictionary to which Dunash took exception. They refute his criticism and vindicate Menahem. In the course of their vindication, they make many interesting grammatical remarks which contributed to the elucidation of grammatical theory. Judah Ibn Sheshet, a disciple of Dunash, wrote a rejoinder to the rejoinder in the name of the disciples of Dunash, where he, in a biting satire written partly in metrical rhymed poetry, refutes the disciples of Menahem.

100. JUDAH CHAYUJ

Of the above-mentioned disciples of Menahem, only the last one attained to prominence and greatness; this is Judah Ibn Daud Chayuj (end of tenth and beginning of the eleventh century). The details of his life are unknown. He was born in Fez, North Africa, and later emigrated to Cordova where he had many pupils among whom was also the famous Samuel Ibn Nagrela.

His fame rests mainly on his writings and he is proclaimed by later grammarians as the founder of scientific study of Hebrew grammar. He wrote in Arabic three grammatical works, on the weak verbs, on the doubled verbs and the *Book of Punctuation* (Sepher ha-Nikud). In the first one, after speaking generally on the pronounced letters (as he called them, letters in motion) and the silent and weak or resting letters, he devotes himself to a systematic elaboration of the weak verbs and their conjugation. In the course of the discussion, he establishes definitely the law of triliterality of Hebrew roots, namely, that every root must have at least three letters as its root, and overthrew completely the theory previously held that there may be roots of two letters and even one. He divides his treatise into three parts, one on the verbs beginning with a weak letter Aleph or Yod (Pe Alef and Pe Yod), the other on the verbs having the second radical Vav or Yod (Aen Vav, Aen Yod), and the last on verbs whose third radical is He or Alef (Lamed He, Lamed Aleph). Not only is there in the book a systematic delineation of the rules of all these conjugations, but there is a list of all such verbs given, with complete reference to their use in the Bible in various forms and all peculiarities noted. The same thoroughness is seen in his work on the doubled verbs (Kephulim) where all laws of their conjugations are clearly treated of. In both works, the various derivations of nouns from verbs are discussed and elucidated.

In his work on punctuation, he discusses the Sheva, (i. e. semivowel), the Dagesh, and the vowel pointing of nouns and their various changes. Considerable space is given to the law governing the placing of accents and the changes accruing in the vowel pointing from that. His works were later translated into Hebrew by Moses Ibn Gikatilia.

101. IBN JANACH

Chayuj was succeeded by one still greater than he, whose labors in that field practically almost completed the structure of Hebrew grammar, and that is Jonah Ibn Janach also known as Abulwalid Mervan (990–1050). He lived at first in Cordova, but also spent some time in Lucena, where he was instructed by Isaac Gikatilia, the pupil of Saruk in the science of grammar. In the year 1012, when Cordova was destroyed by the Berbers, he together with many other Jews among whom was also Samuel Ibn Nagrela fled from there and settled in Saragossa. Ibn Janach was a physician by profession and even wrote a number of books on medicine, but his great interest lay in the Bible. It is only from his great desire to understand the Holy Writ that he devoted himself to the study of Hebrew language and its structure.

His first book in this field which was written in Cordova, was one which intended to complete the theories of Chayuj on the weak and doubled verbs, and he named it in Arabic *Mustabila,* i. e. the complement. There, he not only completed what Chayuj had omitted on this subject, but also criticized him on a number of points and refuted some of his views. This called forth rejoinders from Chayuj's pupils, especially Samuel Ibn Nagrela, who wrote a polemic against Ibn Janach's book. The latter wrote another book replying to Nagrela's objections. He also wrote two other books on the same subject, one called The Reconciliation, where different criticisms are refuted, and one a commentary upon Chayuj's works. In all these works, he elaborated his own theory of the construction of the largest part of the verbs.

His Magnum Opus is his grammar which he called *The Book of Critique,* namely, containing critical studies of the Hebrew language (Arabic, Al-Tankikh). This book was supposed to comprise the entire science of the language, embracing both its grammatical construction and the vocabulary. It is divided into two parts, one devoted to grammar named *Rikmah* (many-colored web) and the second one, *Book of the Roots,* a lexicon. The first part contains forty-six chapters, half of which are devoted to grammar proper, and the other half to syntax and exegesis. In the grammatical part, he discusses the parts of speech, phonetics, the use of the prefixes and the changing of their pointing, the structure of verb forms, and especially noun formation. To this subject, he devoted many chapters and gave a complete outline of the declensions of all nouns. The subject of verbs he passed over rather briefly, inasmuch as he dealt with it in his previous writings. Of especial great value is the part devoted to the syntax, and he is considered, by many, the founder of the Hebrew syntax and indeed he was hardly surpassed in that field by his successors. In the elaboration of his theories of syntax, he fixed numerous rules for the exegesis of the Bible and also explained hundreds of difficult passages, but this service of Ibn Janach will be discussed in the proper place. The second part also contains valuable grammatical remarks but is of especial lexicographical importance, inasmuch as Ibn Janach endeavors to give the various shades of meaning which each root has and elucidates it by examples. Besides, he made greater use than his predecessors of the comparison with Arabic and thus succeeded in elucidating the meaning of many hitherto unknown words. Ibn Janach's books were written in Arabic, but his Critique, the Magnum Opus, both parts, the *Rikma* and book of roots, were translated into Hebrew by Judah Ibn Tibbon.

102. THE SPANISH SCHOOL OF GRAMMARIANS AND LEXICOGRAPHERS

The works of Chayuj and Ibn Janach aroused great interest for further study in the science of language, and a number of greater and lesser scholars continued to labor in this field, and by their works enriched Hebrew literature, and the knowledge of the sacred language. The foremost among them was Samuel Ibn Nagrela (993–1055), the leader of the Jews in Andalusia known as Hanagid, i. e. the prince. He was a pupil of Chayuj's, and, according to the testimony of Ibn Ezra in one place, he wrote twenty-two books on grammar, but these must have been small treatises and were most likely combined in the larger book, the *Book of Riches* (Sepher ha-Osher), i. e. on the richest of treasures of Hebrew. It was, however, lost and we have only a few citations. The poet Solomon Ibn Gaberol (1021–1070) also wrote a long grammatical poem containing an outline of grammar.

Of greater value is the work of Moses Ibn Gikatilia, who like Ibn Janach hailed from Cordova and later settled in Saragossa. He translated Chayuj's works into Hebrew and wrote a book on the gender in Hebrew under the name *Male and Female* (Zekorim U-Nekeboth). Ibn Ezra cites many of his views on a number of grammatical points. His contemporary, Judah Ibn Balaam (died 1100), born in Toledo and lived in Seville, wrote a number of treatises on grammar and lexicography. These are, *A Book of Homonyms,* i. e. explanation of words which are used in different meaning (Tajanis), a *Book of Particles,* namely, prepositions and conjunctions, on *Derived Verbs,* and finally, a very valuable book on accents and vowels known as a Guide for the Bible Readers (Horoyath ha-Korē). All these books were written in Arabic but were translated into Hebrew.

Of some importance are also the works of Isaac Ibn Jashus of Toledo who lived about this time and who wrote a book of conjugations and Levi Ibn Al Taban whose work *The Key* (Mafteach) is often cited by later writers. To the number of workers in this field may also be added the name of the famous poet Jehudah Halevi (see Ch. 9) whose passages in the Kuzari on the nature of Hebrew and on the characters of the vowels and accents elucidate a number of points in grammar and phonetics.

103. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

The great interest which was manifested in Spain, and in other Mohammedan countries, in the Hebrew language and its grammar and lexicography did not at first spread to the Jewish communities residing in Christian Europe. The scholars there were primarily interested in the study of the Talmud and its commentaries. But gradually, an awakening of interest in the Bible and its language took place also there. The Hebrew writings of Menahem and Dunash and others on the subjects of grammar, exegesis, and lexicography spread to all parts of Jewry and were great factors in calling forth this awakening. The more they were studied by the scholars of France, Italy and Germany, the greater became the interest. It is true, that for a long time only the theories of Menahem and Dunash held sway among the French and German Jews, even at the time when they were already abandoned in Spain, for the writings of Chayuj, Ibn Janach, and others were unknown to them as they were written in Arabic. Thus, the great Bible commentator, Solomon Itzchaki (Rashi, see Ch. 8) still follows Menahem and Dunash, though his fine sense of language discerned many a flaw in their theories and he often deviated from them. Likewise, Rashi's famous grandson, the Talmudist, Jacob ben Meir, known as Rabbi Tam, i. e. the innocent and perfect, wrote a book by the name of *The Decisions* (ha-Hachraoth) to decide between Menahem and Dunash, where he often also criticizes both of them. But as a whole, the grammatical views of the early Spanish scholars prevailed.

The interest aroused in Hebrew studies by such great spiritual leaders as the above mentioned gradually increased, and it did not take long before Italy and France, especially Southern France became great centers of Jewish literature in all its branches. A great factor in bringing about this phenomenon, practically the mediator between Spain and the other countries, was the well-known Abraham Ibn Ezra.

Ibn Ezra, after long wanderings (for his life see Ch. VII) settled for a time in Rome (1140) and there he began his literary activity in the field of Hebrew philology. His works are first, the *Mosnaim* (the scales) which is the earliest. In it he deals primarily with the explanation of the grammatical terminology. But it is not a mere dictionary of the terminology of grammar, but really almost a complete grammar in a very brief form. It is something like an introduction to the study of Hebrew grammar. The second one, *Sephat Yether* (The Preferred Language), is primarily devoted to a defense of Saadia Gaon against the strictures of Dunash but contains also some of his own grammatical views. The third work is his *Yesode Diḳduḳ,* the elements of grammar, where a complete set of rules of Hebrew grammar is given dealing with all its parts. And finally, he wrote later the *Zachoth,* i. e. purity or clarity, meaning by it the purity of the Hebrew language. This books deals like his elements with the entire field of Hebrew grammar but in a more intensive and extensive way. It contains also several chapters on prosody and the theory of the Hebrew meter. He wrote also another book under the name of *Sopha Berura,* The Pure Language, where he discusses certain problems in grammar but, in spite of the name, not in a very clear manner. In the introduction to the book, Ibn Ezra discusses certain phases of Bible exegesis and language study, especially the relation of Hebrew to Arabic and Aramaic.

Ibn Ezra's contribution to Hebrew philology consists not so much in the novelty of his theories as in the fact that *his* were the first systematic grammatical works which were written in Hebrew, and which embodied the fruits of the labors in that field by the great Spanish grammarians and lexicographers. He thus made this accumulated knowledge accessible to the Jews of Western Europe to whom Arabic was a sealed book. Yet, Ibn Ezra was no mere compiler. Everything he wrote he stamped with his personality. Not only is there originality in his recasting the grammatical knowledge in a systematic and methodical way, but also in his concise, vivacious, and witty style which imparts a peculiar charm even to dry rules of grammar.

The activity of Ibn Ezra gave impetus to other scholars to continue his work. His disciple, Solemon Ibn Parchon, followed his example. He emigrated from Spain and settled in Salerno, Italy, where he composed a dictionary under the name of *Machbereth ha-Aruch,* a name borrowed from Menahem's work on the one hand and from the Talmudical Lexicon of Nathan ben Jehiel (Ch. X, Sect. C) Aruch, on the other. It is modeled primarily after Ibn Janach's Book of Roots, but with many additions from Chayuj and his own. He drew on both Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic for his explanations of Hebrew words and also explains many Biblical passages. There are also contained in this work a number of historical data bearing upon the development of the scientific and literary study of Hebrew.

104. THE KIMHI FAMILY

The sojourn of Ibn Ezra in France and Italy left more than a passing impression. It practically helped towards the establishment of a new center of learning and great literary activity, namely, the above-mentioned center of Southern France. The Provence, as that part of France was then called, was in the twelfth century, next to Spain, a happy haven of rest for the Jews. The liberal policy of its counts and dukes enabled the Jewish communities to prosper and increase in numbers, and on account of its proximity to Mohammedan Spain, the center of culture at that time, it also became a seat of learning. For the same reason, the Jews of Provence were greatly influenced by their brethern across the Pyrenees, and, likewise, began to develop a considerable literary productivity. An important factor in this development was the influx of immigrant scholars from Spain who settled in various cities of the Provence. These were, practically, the mediators between the cultures of the East and the West. Being proficient in Arabic and also masters of Hebrew, they laid open to their brethern the treasures of Jewish knowledge contained in Arabic written works by translating the latter into Hebrew. We will have to say a good deal more about this service of theirs, but for the present, we may remark that it was through them that Provence became, in the succeeding centuries, the center of Jewish literature which ultimately took over the leadership from Spain. The twelfth century saw the rise of that center.

As in Spain so in Provence, study of Hebrew and exegesis of the Bible preceded the other phases of literary activity. Work in this field began simultaneously in two different places. Judah Ibn Tibbon, born in Granada Spain and settled in Lunel, translated there Ibn Jahach's Magnum Opus, *the Rikmah,* and the *Book of Roots* into Hebrew and thus introduced him and his works to the Hebrew reading Jews of Western Europe. In Narbonne, another city of Provence, a whole family devoted its energy and great ability for two generations to the great work of searching the mysteries of the sacred tongue and to the exploration of the treasures of the Bible. This was the Kimhi family, consisting of the head Joseph and his two sons, Moses and David. Joseph Kimhi emigrated from Spain in his youth and settled in Narbonne. There for a period of twenty years (1150–1170), he carried on his literary activity, he wrote poems, translated books from the Arabic, and wrote a commentary on the Bible, and did many more things. But his real contribution was in the field of grammar. His first work is *The Book of Remembrance* (Sepher ha-Zikaron). It was intended as a textbook and covers the entire field. He made two important contributions to Hebrew grammar, as he was the first one to introduce the division of the vowels into long and short, and thus increased their number from the adopted seven to ten. As he followed the Sephardic pronunciation, he arranged them thus: long: A, O, I, E, (EI) U, and correspondingly short: A (Patach) O, I, E, U. He gained three vowels, short O (Kometz Katan), the short I (Chirik Katan) which is not followed by Yod, and Kubutz, short U, represented by three dots. His innovation was accepted by all grammarians, and even by the German ones though it does not exactly tally with their pronunciation, but it produced good results as it facilitated the promulgation of a number of rules. His second contribution is the introducing of two verb forms, the passives of piel and hiphil. They were already mentioned by Ibn Ezra, but not sufficiently elaborated.

His other work is of less importance and is called *The Document* (Sepher ha-Galu) and deals with lexigraphical and exegetical questions and is primarily a criticism of the book of Jacob Tam (above, *The Decisions*), where he attempts to decide between Menahem and Dunash. Joseph Kimhi's books were long forgotten and only recently brought to light and published, but his theories were given wide publicity by the writings of his sons.

His son, Moses Kimhi (1170–1190) followed in the footsteps of his father and wrote a real grammatical textbook by the name of *Shebile ha-Daath* (The Paths of Knowledge). Its merit consists in its brevity, and on this account it was long used in the schools and was even translated into Latin and used by Sebastian Münster, a Christian Hebraist of the sixteenth century.

The greatest of this family was the younger son, David (born 1160 died 1235) (Ch. VIII), of whom we will have much to say later. He was great in many fields, and likewise in that of Hebrew philology. His chief work is *The Michlol* (Compendium) which, following Ibn Janach, he divided into two parts, Grammar, and Book of Roots, a dictionary of roots of Biblical words. His grammar differs from those of his predecessors by his comprehensive dealing with the verb, to which he devotes both more space and also places its description first. He covers all the rules governing the conjugations of verbs, changes of punctuation and accents. *The Michlol* contains also complete tables of conjugations, and is distinguished by the clarity of its style and conciseness. On account of all these qualities, it overshadowed all previous works and for centuries it was considered the leading grammar.

His *Book of Roots* enjoyed similar popularity. It is not merely a reworked copy of Ibn Janach's similar book, but an original work. In each article, all forms of the verb are given as well as all its derivatives, nouns, and adjectives. Wherever he found it necessary, he also added brief exegetical remarks upon Biblical passages wherein the forms of the root are found.

Besides *The Michlol* in two parts, David wrote also *The Et Sopher,* The Pen of the Scribe, a manual of punctuation where the rules of punctuation together with the rules of the accents are discussed. In the writings of David Kimhi, Hebrew grammar and lexicography reached its zenith, at least as far as the entire Mediæval Ages are concerned. Those that came after are only gatherers of grain after the reapers.

Chapter VIII

BIBLE EXEGESIS

A. The Gaonic Period

105. INTRODUCTORY

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the intensive study of the Hebrew language, its grammar, and vocabulary which began in the East, i. e. Babylonia, was practically only a means to a better understanding of the Bible. It followed, therefore, that the very same people who devoted a great deal of their energy to the exploration of the secrets of Hebrew, should have devoted still more energy to the exploration of the Holy Writ. And thus it was that simultaneously with the activity in the field of grammar and lexicography, there flourished great literary activity in the field of Bible exegesis.

But this field was a wide one and the number of its workers greater than in other fields. They hailed from different lands and different parts of the world, as almost every Jewish center contributed its quota of Bible exegetes. The Bible was the deep concern of every Jew, and wherever they were, it was studied and commented upon. Yet, this period of Biblical exegesis differs greatly from the earlier period of Midrashic exegesis. It is primarily a period of Peshat, i. e. an endeavor to understand the plain meaning of the words and to present the sense of the contents in as lucid a manner as possible. It is, of course, intended to extract all the moral and religious teachings of the Bible, but as a whole, it kept aloof from homiletics, though it was not wanting in many commentators. The studies and investigations in Hebrew grammar and lexicography prepared the way for this kind of exegesis and made it possible.

This kind of exegesis like the study of language received in its birthplace, Babylonia, a great impetus from the Karaite movement. They who fell back upon the Bible were the first to delve into the explanations of the sacred writings, either in order to disprove Talmudic interpretations, or to deduct new ones. The Rabbanites, on their part, had to do likewise in order to show that Talmudic interpretation is not forced and that it agrees with the actual sense of the word rightly understood. In time, the explanation of the Bible became an end in itself. At the time when philosophic thought began to occupy the minds of Jewish scholars and a need for the reconciliation of the principles of philosophy with the ideas of the Bible began to be felt, philosophic exegesis arose where an attempt at reconciliation similar to that of Philo (Ch. V) was made. But the later philosophic exegesis differed greatly from the Philonian as it kept away from excessive allegorizing and was based on a deeper knowledge of the language. Thus, Bible exegesis during this period exhibits many phases and forms an important branch of the literary activity of the period.

106. EXEGETIC WORK OF SAADIA

The great Saadia, the founder and the pioneer in many branches of study, was also the first great commentator of the Bible. Yet in his early youth, he undertook to defend Jewish tradition against the Karaites, as well as against all who either misinterpreted the Bible, or attacked it from various points of view. Among the many enemies of traditional Judaism at that time, the ninth and tenth centuries, there was one by the name of Hivi Al-Balkhi (flourished in the middle of the ninth century) who was extremely rabid in his attacks on Judaism. This Hivi wrote a book wherein he propounded two hundred arguments against the teachings of the Pentateuch. This radical book which pointed out many contradictions in the sacred writings was widely spread in many circles for two generations, and its ideas found many adherents. Saadia, therefore, wrote a book entitled a Refutation of Hivi Al-Balkhi, wherein he refutes his questions one by one with great skill. The book was written in Hebrew in rhymed prose, though the title was in Arabic, a large part of it is still preserved.[1]

In this book as well as in several others which he has written against the Karaites, Saadia made many contributions to the exegesis of the Bible. But these polemical controversies were only preliminary to his great work in the field of Bible explanation. He became convinced, that what the Jews needed at the time, was a complete translation of the entire Bible into Arabic, as well as a commentary on it in the same language, both of which shall definitely vindicate the traditional view of the Bible. And he undertook this great task single-handed.

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[1] A considerable fragment of it found in the Cairo Genizah was edited and published with English introduction and notes by Prof. Israel Davidson in 1915.

Saadia's translation of the Bible into Arabic is an epoch-making work. It not only became the standard Arabic translation for all Arabic speaking Jews for centuries, but it exerted great influence on the Mohammedan world. It is a masterpiece from both the point of view of style and manner of interpretation, as it is not merely a translation, but a commentary as well. Saadia himself was conscious of it and called it Tafsir, i. e. commentary. Yet it is not a paraphrase. On the whole, he translated every word of the Bible, though wherever necessary, for the sake of elucidation and clarity, he adds a word or even a phrase here and there. He seemed to have taken the Targum Onkelos as his model. Like it, Saadia removes all anthropomorphisms, but he went further than the author of the Targum. He also translated proper names, especially of tribes, nations, countries, and cities. In this, of course, he had to analyze them etymologically or adapt some suggestions. Saadia seemed to have prepared two versions of his translation of a large number of the Biblical books, one with an extensive commentary intended for scholars and one without commentary, a popular edition.

But great as he was in his Bible translation, he appears still greater in his commentaries. In them not only the deep student of the Hebrew language is evident but the philosopher as well. His general point of view is, first that the Bible is compatible with all principles of reason. Second, that it is as a whole a revealed book, and thirdly, that tradition has great validity in interpretation; on this triple basis his commentaries are founded, namely, reason, revelation, and tradition. He, however, lays great emphasis on the element of reason, and he endeavors to make the Bible so clear that nothing obscure shall remain.

In his endeavor to maintain the unified point of view in the explanation of the book, he, as a rule, prefixed to each book an introduction wherein he propounded the basic principles from which the book as a whole should be viewed. He also briefly summarizes its contents, pointing out its divisions and their relations to each other. Especially interesting are his introductions to the Pentateuch and the Book of Proverbs. In the first, he dwells on the educational value of the five books of Moses, how they are intended to train the Jewish people in the path of religion and righteousness. He then tells of its uniqueness of value and its authority showing how its teachings agree with the principles of reason, which agreement in itself serves as a proof for the validity of the Torah. He also adduces another proof for its validity and applicability of its laws, from the way the prophets applied them to all exigencies of life. In the introduction to the Book of Proverbs, he discusses extensively the opposition between the sensual human nature and his reason and shows how the book intends to teach the path of life by recording this antagonism. This psychological discussion is followed by remarks on the content and form of the book, its divisions and their logical connections.

In the commentaries proper, Saadia follows a strict scientific manner. He evinces deep insight into the meaning of the words, elucidates each word by numerous references to other passages where the words are used, and although he uses tradition as his authority, he keeps aloof from homiletic interpretation. He was the real founder of the Peshat Exegesis, i. e. a rational explanation and one built on the understanding of the language. With great zeal, Saadia reconciles in his commentary all apparent contradictions of the Bible. In such passages where contradictions of their contents may be quoted from other passages reference is made to the contradictions and the difficulties straightened out.

It is to be regretted that a large part of the translation of the Bible and especially of the commentary is lost. We have only the Pentateuch without commentary, besides also some fragments of the commentary on Exodus. Of the other books of the Bible, only the translations of Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and Daniel are preserved together with their commentaries.[2] There are also some translations of several of the Scrolls and fragments of commentaries on them. From what is left as well as from the hundreds of quotations in the works of the later commentators, we can estimate the great importance of Saadia as an exegete of the Bible.

107. OTHER BABYLONIAN COMMENTATORS

Saadia showed the Babylonian Gaonim, heads of Academies, how important it is to study the Bible and understand it. Some of them followed in his footsteps. Thus, Aaron ben Sarajda, his great opponent in the time of his conflict with the Exilarch David ben Zakkai, who later became Gaon of Pumbedita, also wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch (about 960). We know little about it except that it bore a philosophic character.

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[2] These were edited and supplied with a French translation by the late scholar, J. Derenbourg.

A commentator of greater importance was the last Gaon of Sura, the father-in-law of the famous Rab Hai Samuel ben Hofni (died 1034). He translated and commented upon the Pentateuch. He followed Saadia in the translation but is more literal. His commentary was an extensive one, and contained excursuses on various questions. Ibn Ezra tells us that Samuel in his commentary to Genesis 28, 10–22 had two long discussions in connection with the journey and the dream of Jacob, one on journeys in the Bible and the other on dreams in general. Samuel was a rationalist and he tried to rationalize many events in the Bible. Thus, he says that Jacob's wrestling with the angel as well as the speaking of Balaam's ass occurred in dreams. From some recovered fragments of the commentary, we can see that where he did not digress, it was a very excellent one. It is analytic and the meaning of every word given and ascertained by comparison with references to the usage of the word in other passages.

His son-in-law Rab Hai, the last Gaon who was a student of the Hebrew language, also wrote a commentary to the book of Job. He was very exact in his search for the true meaning of words, and even inquired once of the Syrian Katholicos, head of the Christian Church, how to explain a certain passage in the Psalms.

108. BIBLE EXEGESIS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Just as we have seen in the case of the literary activity in the field of language study, that it rapidly spread from Babylonia to North Africa, another Jewish center under Mohammedan rule, so likewise in the case of Bible exegesis, Kairwan comes upon the heels of Babylon and produces commentators of note. The contemporary of Saadia, the physician and philosopher Isaac Israeli (845–940), wrote an extensive commentary to the first two chapters of Genesis that dealt at length with the problem of creation from a philosophic point of view. The grammarian, Judah Ibn Koreish (Ch. VII), besides explaining many Biblical passages in his dictionary wrote a commentary to the Book of Chronicles, for he is quoted repeatedly in an anonymous commentary to that book, the author of which seemed to have been a pupil of Saadia.

A generation later, we met in Kairwan a great commentator in the person of Rabbi Hananel (1000–1050), the famous North African Talmudist. Though his main activity was the Talmud (Ch. X) he did not neglect the Bible and wrote a commentary, in Hebrew, on the Pentateuch. The entire commentary was lost, but from the copious quotations from it, found in later commentaries, it is evident that it exerted great influence upon the generations. The fragments show a tendency towards Midrashic explanation, yet on the whole there is a keenness of understanding of the Bible prevalent in it. At times, when it concerns a matter of oral tradition which the Karaites denied, Hanannel launches a lengthy polemic against them though he does not mention them by name. Thus, in his excursus to Exodus XII, 2, he deals at length with the question of the calendar and tries to prove that the calendar was always fixed by mathematical calculation, and that the fixing of the first of the month by testimony of witnesses who saw the birth of the moon, was only a formal act. All this is intended against the Karaites who rejected the Rabbanite calendar and reverted to the testimony of eye-witnesses. Hanannel also knew Arabic and explained many words by comparison with similar Arabic words. His style is light and easy, and at times, he breaks into rhymed prose. His colleague, Rabbi Nisin (Ch. X), also wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch of which a few quotations are found in later exegetical works.

109. THE SPANISH SCHOOL OF COMMENTATORS

With the rise of Jewish learning in Spain and along with the flourishing of the great school of Hebrew grammarians and lexicographers, there began also activity in the field of exegesis, for as said, the study of language was only a means for understanding the Bible. As early as the second half of the tenth century, we hear of a commentator in Spain and that is Joseph Ibn Abitur. He wrote a Hebrew commentary to the Psalms of which some fragments are preserved. It follows the Midrashic way of interpretation, but its style offers some interesting points, inasmuch as Ibn Abitur attempts to coin a number of new Hebrew words.

Menahem ben Saruk's Machbereth (Ch. VII), while it is intended as a dictionary, is a great contribution to exegesis for he explained there many difficult Biblical passages. He is constantly quoted by the great exegete Rashi. He also deserves the credit for first discovering the basic form of Biblical poetry, *the parallelism,* namely, that each verse is divided into two halves, the second one repeating the same thought only in different language. His assumption has been verified by all modern commentators and followed in all explanations. Dunash's strictures on Menahem as well as the polemic literature between him and Menahem's pupils also added to the exegesis of the Bible.

Very great was the contribution to exegesis of Ibn Janach (Ch. VII). Not only has he explained in his grammar, *Rikmah,* and *Book of Roots* hundreds of Biblical passages but he really laid down principles of exegesis. He demonstrated the theory of frequent interchange of letters, and made the observation that words in passages were often omitted for some reason or other and are, therefore, to be understood. All these remarks facilitated the explanation of difficult passages and many emendations suggested by modern commentators can be traced back to Ibn Janach.

Yet, he was no Bible critic in the modern sense, on the contrary, he believed not only in its Divine character, but also accepted the interpretations of the Talmud and Midrash as truth. He believed, however, that his own interpretations based on the signs of language are also true for the Bible has more than one meaning.

Moses Ibn Gikatilia (Ch. VII), the grammarian who followed Ibn Janach, wrote commentaries to the books of Isaiah, Minor Prophets, Psalms and Job. He is copiously quoted by Ibn Ezra in his commentaries to these books from which it is evident that his commentaries were widely read. From the quotations, it is to be seen that Ibn Gikatilia belonged to the liberal school of commentators. He is especially distinguished by his keen historical sense which he utilized in assigning certain chapters of the prophets and the Psalms to different periods. Thus, he was the first one to assume that there are chapters in the Book of Psalms which were written later. According to him, some Psalms were written in Babylon. He even indicated his belief in a later origin of the chapters 40–66 of Isaiah. He also endeavored to explain the miracles of the Bible in a rational way. In addition to his commentaries, he also translated the Book of Job into Arabic, which translation is still preserved while the commentaries are lost.

His contemporary, both colleague and opponent, the grammarian Judah Ibn Balaam (Ch. VII), also wrote commentaries to the Pentateuch, Joshua, Isaiah, and Psalms. His commentary to Isaiah is preserved and from it we can see that he followed the method of Saadia. He is quoted also by Ibn Ezra in his commentary to Psalms, which quotations testify to his fine understanding of the book. Ibn Balaam is more orthodox in his exegesis, and often takes to task Ibn Gikatalia for his rational views on miracles. His commentary to the Pentateuch, he named *The Book of Decisions,* which can only be explained by the assumption that he endeavored there to decide between different views and select the right one, and from the few fragments preserved, we see that he really did follow this method for he quotes copiously from Saadia and other commentators and compares their views.

The period (the end of the eleventh century) produced also an exegete who was rather a radical Bible critic by the name of Isaac Ibn Jabsus who is also known as a grammarian. This Isaac ventured to suggest that certain passages in the Pentateuch, such as Genesis XXXVI, 31–43, were not written by Moses. He also made an excessive number of emendations in the Bible. Ibn Ezra quotes him by the name of Yitzhaki (as his name was Yitzchak) and censures him severely, applying to him a number of unkind epithets.

The philosopher and poet Solomon Ibn Gabirol (Ch. IX) also seemed to have written some commentaries to at least part of the Pentateuch and maybe even to the Psalms. But nothing is known of their nature except one quotation by Ibn Ezra to Genesis II, 8–12 from which we can see that it was of an allegoric mystic character. In the quotation we read that Gabirol said, that Eden symbolizes the upper world; the garden, the lower world; the stream which flows from the garden, universal matter; Adam, Eve, and the serpent symbolize the rational, animal and vegetative (desiring) souls respectively, and so forth.

In conclusion, we must also mention the chapter by the poet Moses Ibn Ezra (Ch. IX) in his Book on Poetry[3] dealing with the rhetoric of the Bible. It is not directly exegesis but in his careful and detailed explanation of the Biblical figures of speech, their nature and usage, he contributed greatly to a better understanding of many chapters in the Bible, especially in the prophetic and poetic books.

B. The French School of Exegetes

110. *GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS*

Simultaneously with the flourishing of Biblical exegesis in Spain and other lands where the Arabic culture was dominant, there arose also in Northern France a great school of Bible commentators whose works left a lasting impression upon Jewish literature and probably even greater than that of the first.

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[3] It has been recently translated into Hebrew by the late Dr. Benzion Halper under the name Shirath Israel, i. e. Poetry of Israel.

The difference between these two schools is as great as the difference between these two types of Jewries and the difference in their general cultural status. The Jews of Spain, as we know, participated freely in the general culture of the land and were saturated with it, and this mastery of secular knowledge is reflected in all their literary work. The Jews of France and Germany, on the other hand, confined their activity almost entirely to the study of the Talmud, and were as a rule but little influenced by the culture of their neighbors. Besides, their neighbors hardly had any culture or literature that could exert any influence on the Jews. And whatever culture there was in these lands, was entirely in the hands of the representatives of the Church with whom the Jews could scarcely fraternize. Jewish life thus flowed on in its own channel undisturbed by external currents, and it is no wonder then that it developed in a somewhat one-sided manner.

Yet what it lost in variety, it gained in depth and intensity. Its world view was thoroughly Jewish, and this view is reflected in all forms of literature which was produced by the Jews of France or Germany, in the study of the Talmud and its application to life, in the religious poetry (Ch. IX) and Bible exegesis. The center of spiritual interest in these countries was the Talmud and all that belongs to it, but at no time did the Jews anywhere forsake the Bible, and side by side with the mighty stream of Talmudic study, there flowed a lesser stream of Biblical study. In this Biblical study of the French Jews, there are to be discerned two currents, one, the homiletic-Midrashic, and the other the one of *Peshat,* i. e. the plain explanation of the Bible based on understanding of the words and their connected meaning. These two currents were never totally separated. At times the first prevailed, and at times the other, but very often they were united. This happy combination of Derash and Peshat is the peculiar characteristic of the French school of exegesis, and is typified in its greatest exponents as will be evident.

The beginnings of Biblical exegesis in France are very difficult to trace. It seems that French and German Jewries were in their earlier development greatly influenced by Palestine, which, even in its low state during the ninth and tenth centuries, never ceased to influence the Jewries of the Diaspora. As historical documents are constantly being brought to light, we begin to see the effects of that influence. There was a continual stream of Jewish travelers to Palestine from West European countries and vice versa. Inquiries were sent from Germany and France to Jerusalem as late as the eleventh century. On the other hand, teachers from Palestine, especially Agadists and Masorites, Biblical scholars, visited these countries.

It was in this way that both Palestinian specialties, the homiletic-Agadic and the Masoretic-linguistic, were transplanted to these countries. The fact that conditions in France and Germany were not unlike those which existed in Palestine under Christian rule when Agada was fostered (see Ch. VI) explains the deep interest of the Jews there in that form of Biblical explanation. Here, like there, the Jew suffered deeply and his soul thirsted for comfort and alleviation from misery. And this, the mild and colorful Agada supplied him. There were also traveling preachers who delivered their homilies on the Sabbath in the crowded synagogues. There developed then a kind of later Midrashic school of exegetes. The greatest of these was Moses Hadarshan, i. e. the homiletist or preacher, of Narbonne. Another was Eliezer ben Tabia who, though he produced his work in Greece, hailed from Mayence, Germany. The compiled Midrashic commentaries were discussed above (Sect. 88). It may be added that these works though called Midrashim were not all compilations of earlier Agada but contain the explanations of the authors themselves which are of exegetic value. These two homiletic exegetes found followers such as Menchem ben Solomon of Rome who in the year 1139 compiled a similar commentary under the name of *Sechel Tob,* Good Reason, and others. But the works of Moses exerted great influence upon his countrymen and he is constantly quoted by the later exegetes.

From Palestine was transplanted also the knowledge of the Masorah and as much grammar and linguistics as were known there to France, and in early times the great Talmudic scholars occupied themselves likewise with Masorah and Bible study. We hear of Rabbi Gershom, the son of Judah, known as the light of exile (Ch. X), copying Masoretic lists and transmitting correct readings to posterity. Joseph Bonfils, known as *Tob Elem* (the Hebrew translation of the French cognomen), also copied Masoretic books, and also, according to the testimony of some, wrote a commentary to the Pentateuch. And thus interest in the Bible grew and spread among scholars.

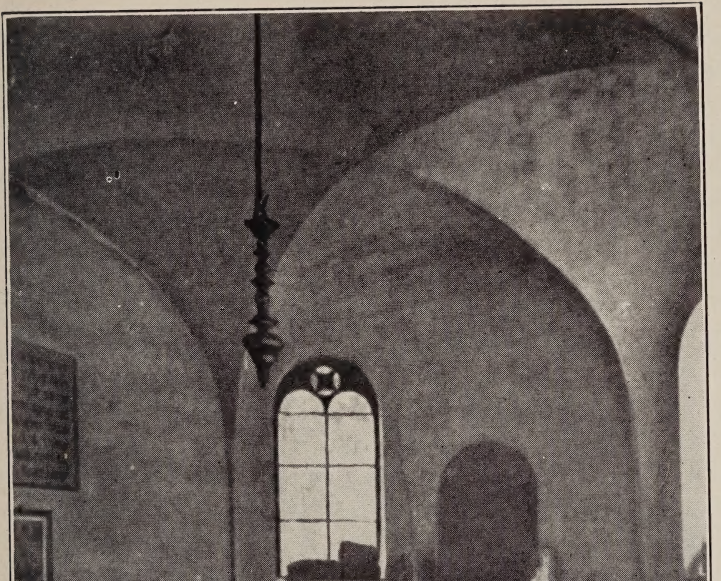
Soon, however, Biblical scholars formed a class for themselves. There were some people who specialized in writing, punctuating and reading the Bible in the synagogue. They were called by different names, either scribes, punctators (Nakdonim), or Karaim, i. e. readers. These people also became slowly interested in exegesis and some of them began to compile commentaries. The purpose of these commentators was to explain the Bible in the way of Peshat, plain, and in accordance with the knowledge of the language in the measure they possessed. The earliest of this class of exegetes was Rabbi Menahem, the son of Helbo, in the middle of the eleventh century, who was also given the title of Kara, i. e. reader or Bible scholar. He must either have written a commentary to the entire Bible, or at least notes to the same, for he is quoted frequently by Rashi and his Nephew, Joseph Karo (Sect. 111). From these quotations we can see that Menahem possessed a keen understanding of the Bible and that he was also well grounded in the rudiments of Hebrew grammar and was able to discern the shades of meaning in words.

But Bible study in France could never remain the share of the few or of a class. The great Talmudists again found also time for the Bible and it seems, that these two studies really went hand in hand during that time. The heads of the Talmudic Academies (Yeshiboth) expounded the Bible to their students along with the Talmud. It is no wonder then that it did not take long and these Academies produced from their midst one of the greatest commentators of the ages.

111. SOLOMON BEN ISAAC (*Rashi*)

This man was Solomon Itzchaki, son of Isaac, or as he is commonly known, Rashi, initials of Rabbi Solomon Itzchaki. Rashi was born in the year 1040, at the city of Troyes, France. He received his education first at home, but later he went, as was customary in those days, to study at the Academy of Worms under Jacob ben Yakar, disciple of the great Rabbi Gershom, and later under Isaac Halevi, another disciple of Gershom. After staying there for some time, he went to the Academy at Mayence, where another great master, Isaac, son of Judah, taught to complete his studies. At the age of twenty-five, he returned to Troyes and being a family man, for he married in his student days, he engaged like most of his countrymen in the wine industry.

His real occupation, however, was the study of the Torah, for though he was not an official rabbi, he was considered one of the greatest scholars of the day, and from all sides, they turned to him for decisions in all questions bearing upon religious matters. As all scholars of the day, he founded an Academy, and due to his great name it was frequented by hundreds of students from all parts of Europe including the Slavonic countries. For a succession of forty years, Rashi taught



Interior of Rashi's Chapel at Worms

Torah to his students, and as it seems both Talmud and Bible, and as a result of his long teaching, both his commentaries to these two great collections of Jewish literature, the Talmud and the Bible, were produced. His old age was embittered by the great suffering of the Jews during the first Crusade (1096) and also by his own sickness. He died in 1105 at the age of sixty-five, mourned by all Jewry.

Many were the qualities which fitted Rashi to be the commentator par excellence, and probably the greatest of them was his character. He is the typical example of the Jewish scholar, the *Talmid Haham,* and his outstanding trait was his simplicity of soul. He was simple in all his ways of life, he practically lived in his own daily life the same Torah which he taught for forty years to his students. And along with his simplicity went his modesty, he was never conscious of his greatness and was always willing to receive instruction as well as to impart it. His love for his people was unbounded and it included every member of his people, even those who had gone astray. But still greater was his love for the Torah. This was the essence of his life, hence his great knowledge of it. There was not a branch of Jewish literature in which he was not master. He did not draw any lines, everything, law, Agada, history and grammar, or even secular sciences, as much as he could derive from Hebrew books, were all open before him. His all-absorbing mind drank in thirstily any information he could possibly lay hold of. Yet with all his piety and absorption of learning, Rashi knew life. He informed himself on matters of business, trade, industry, and even government affairs, as is evidenced from his commentaries.

All these qualities are reflected in his exegetic work and made his commentary what it became. His commentary is an ideal example of the French school of exegetes. In it, there is a harmony between the two methods, the *Derash* and the *Peshat.* The French commentators lacked the deep knowledge of grammar and language, and all the scientific apparatus for exegesis that the Spanish Jewish scholars possessed. But they were led by a simple sense which was close to the spirit of the Bible and were thus enabled to penetrate the depth of its meaning, at times, even better than their more learned brethren. Those often tried to read into the words of the Bible their own ideas, while the French commentators only endeavored to draw out from the Bible whatever they could.[4] This tendency is best exemplified in Rashi. He absorbed the Bible, in the degree it was possible for him, and through this absorption, he often penetrated to the very depth of the meaning of the verse. He was saturated with the spirit of the Agada and its world view; he looked upon the Bible through its own glasses. But he understood also the great value of the words and verses. He used, therefore, many Agadic interpretations, but he also gave the peshat interpretation. The simplicity of his soul demanded simplicity of meaning, and when he does use a Midrashic interpretation he chooses the one which harmonizes with the meaning of the words.

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[4] On this, see A. Geiger, Parshandatha, German Part p. 10.

As a great commentator, he knew the importance, for the understanding of the verse, of the meaning of single words, he therefore endeavors to explain wherever necessary each word, giving their grammatical derivation. For this purpose, he utilized the works of Menahem ben Saruk and Dunash to their fullest extent and often adds his own suggestion. He utilized fully the Aramaic Targumin, both Onkelos and Jonathan, and followed them quite frequently, and likewise made use of all previous commentators and all explanations he read or heard from his teachers, quoting every remark in the name of its author.

As a great teacher, he knew the pedagogic value of similes and examples which bring out the meaning clearer to the average reader, and uses them profusely; and his illustrations and similes are so well known and simple that they bring the enfolded thought of the verse into clear relief. Likewise, are his illustrations and explanations of technical matters clear and numerous. Being endowed with a fund of practical knowledge relating to various trades, agriculture, commerce and other ways of life, he drew upon it for illustration and explanation.

But the greatest merit of his commentary is its style. The style of Rashi reflects his whole soul, it is simple and natural, so that there is hardly an unnecessary phrase in it, and is as pure and clear as was his great heart. It is very close to the style of the Agada in its poetic touch. Rashi has embodied many Midrashic remarks in his commentary with a slight change, but they are hardly distinguishable from his own words. Many are the quotations of Talmudic proverbs and *bon mots* which Jews quote in the improved and changed form that Rashi has given them, and many are the quotations from Rashi that go under the name of Talmudic sayings, though they are never found there, so close is the harmony between the style of Rashi and that of the Agada. Great is also the spirit of his commentary, for not only does it reflect his own great soul but the soul of the people. His love for the Jewish people, for tradition and Torah shines forth from every page. He did not teach ethics, but his words are saturated with an ethical glow which the reader absorbs unconsciously.

It was all these qualities which made his commentary, notwithstanding its shortcomings, the outstanding commentary of the ages. Generations and generations of Jewish children were trained upon it, and Rashi was their constant companion during childhood. *Chumesh,* i. e. the Pentateuch, and Rashi became inseparable and even the most uneducated had a smattering of it. Not to have learned Rashi meant to the Jew during the centuries, even to the one of only a generation ago, a sign of degradation and one who was actually so unfortunate was considered beyond the pale of Jewish civilization. Quotations from Rashi were current in the mouth of almost every Jew, even the ignorant, and many of its expressions are even current in the Yiddish dialect spoken by the Jews of Eastern Europe. Thus, Rashi's commentary became part and parcel of Jewish folk life for centuries.

The commentary made also a great impression upon the non-Jewish world. The great Christian commentator of the Bible, Nicolaus de Lyra (1265–1349), utilized it to a great extent, and through his influence and many more Christian scholars, many of Rashi's interpretations were embodied in the later Latin translations of the Bible as well as in the Standard English Version (King James).

Rashi wrote his commentary to the whole Bible except to Chronicles. The Commentary to that book bearing his name does not belong to him, but emanated from the School of a German exegete by the name of Saadia, and was given the name of Rashi to gain popularity. Part of Joel was also completed by his pupils.

112. OTHER FRENCH COMMENTATORS

Rashi left after him a number of disciples to whom he taught the Bible and who continued his work in the field of Biblical exegesis. One of these who attained prominence in this branch is Joseph ben Simon Kara (1080–1160). He was the nephew of the commentator, Menahem ben Helbo, and like him, he was surnamed Kara on account of his occupation as a Bible reader. At first, he studied with his uncle, and after his death, he came to Rashi. He coöperated with him in his commentary, reciting before him explanations of verse in the name of Menahem, also making his own suggestions here and there. Rashi quotes both the remarks of Menahem which he heard from Joseph and also Joseph himself.

Joseph wrote commentaries to all the prophetic books, to Job, and the Five Scrolls, but as for the Pentateuch, he only added notes to Rashi's commentary. Besides, he seemed to have been the editor of Rashi's commentary to the Bible, and many of his remarks are included there, sometimes under his name and many times anonymously. In his own commentary, he followed Rashi's method, in combining Peshat with Derash, but he surpassed his master, at times, by his great inclination towards the plainer explanation of the Bible. He is especially painstaking to elucidate the connection of the successive verses and endeavors to present to the reader the ideas implicit in the chapter as a whole. He was also careful to ascertain the grammatical meaning of words, their derivation and changes. Kara also possessed critical acumen and was not afraid to express his opinions. In his commentary to Samuel, IX, 9, he concludes from the verse that it was not written by the prophet himself but later, contrary to the Talmudic opinion on the matter.

The other great commentator is Samuel ben Meir (1085–1160), the colleague of Joseph and the grandson of Rashi. He is usually known by the abbreviation of Rashbam, i. e. Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, and wrote also commentaries to several Talmudic tractates, and was one of the leading Tosafists (Ch. X). Samuel studied the Bible together with Joseph under Rashi, and also made a number of suggestions to his grandfather who accepted them and quotes them in his name. His main exegetic work is his commentary to the Pentateuch. He deviated greatly from his grandfather by following mainly the method of the Peshat. His commentary is permeated with a liberal spirit, and in his explanation, he follows strictly the meaning of the words, and though his grammatical knowledge was limited, he was able by his fine linguistic sense to discover independently many grammatical rules established by Chayuj and other Spanish grammarians. He, at times, makes statements which are contrary to accepted traditional opinion, thus, he says in his explanation to Genesis I, 5 that the days of creation terminated with dawn making the night a part of the preceding day. But Samuel was not conscious of any contradiction between tradition and plain meaning of the Torah, for he believed whole-heartedly in the principle of double interpretation of the Bible. Samuel wrote also commentaries to other books of the Bible, but they were evidently lost and only some quotations in later commentaries were preserved. It is quite certain, however, that the last two chapters in Job XLI, XLII were commented upon by him though they go under the name of Rashi.

The last great French commentator was Joseph Bechor Shor (flourished about 1130), literally the firstling of the bullock, so named from the title given to Joseph in the Blessing of Moses, Deut. XXXIII, 17. The euphemistic meaning of this title is, *productive,* for the ox is the symbol of productivity as he is the tiller of the soil, as it is said in Prov. XIV, 4, "Much produce is by the strength of the ox." He was a pupil of the famous Tosafist, Jacob Tam, and himself a great Talmudic scholar and Tosafist. He wrote a commentary to the Pentateuch. His commentary is distinguished by a fine sense for straightening out difficulties and apparent contradictions. Though not acquainted with the Spanish school of Jewish philosophy, he independently explained many passages in a philosophic theological way and made a number of suggestions regarding the proper location of certain verses. He also displays a fine critical sense.

Besides those enumerated there were many Talmudic scholars who busied themselves with the Bible and wrote commentaries on various books. There is even a collective commentary on the Pentateuch in the name of the Tosafists (Ch. X) by the name of Hadar Zekenim, the Glory of the Elders. We thus see that the study of the Bible went hand and hand with the study of the Talmud in France for a long time until the glory of that Jewry began to depart.

C. The Spanish Provence School

113. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

About the time when the French school of exegesis began to decline, there appeared a man who, through his great knowledge, and vast erudition and the brilliant way in which he disseminated that knowledge, gave a great impetus to Jewish learning in France, especially in the southern part, Provence. That man was the above-mentioned (Ch. VI) Abraham Ibn Ezra, grammarian, Bible commentator, poet, philosopher, and astronomer.

But while he was rich in knowledge, a king in the realm of spirit, he was, on the other hand, poor in the goods of this world, a wanderer on the face of the earth. His life was full of struggle and suffering, and we are often amazed at the remarkable strength of his spirit that could produce such great works under trying conditions.

Ibn Ezra was born in the year 1093 at the city of Tudela, Spain. Yet in early youth, he made a name for himself as a Hebrew poet and as a master of that language in many ways. His thirst for knowledge was unbounded and he became proficient in all branches of knowledge of his day. With all this, he suffered greatly and was exceedingly poor. He bewailed his poverty and persistent lucklessness by a brilliant epigram which reads, "Were candles my merchandise, the sun would never have set, were I trader in shrouds, men would live forever." He seemed to have spent a great part of his life in Spain, but most likely wandering from place to place. However, his impetuous spirit did not permit him to remain in his native land, and he ultimately started on his journeys, partly from search for knowledge and partly from a desire for wandering. He went to Egypt first where he stayed for some time, then to Babylonia, Persia, and probably even to India. After leaving his only son, Isaac, whom he took along to Bagdad, he returned to Spain via North Africa. There he made the acquaintance of a generous man, Joseph ben Aruran, who acted for a time as his Mæcenas. Soon, however, his benefactor died, and he remained as poor as ever. He again departed on his journeys and in the year 1140 he stayed for a short time at Rome being honored by the Jews of the city. There he began his great literary activity, wrote his commentaries on Job and Ecclesiastes, grammatical books, and poems. With his usual inclination for wandering, he soon left Rome and visited many cities in Italy where he was welcomed by the leaders of the communities. He dazzled them with his versatile knowledge, writing books for them, composing poems, epigrams, and puzzles, and they repaid him with honor. In 1145, we meet him in Lucca where he completed his commentaries to Isaiah, the other Four Scrolls, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, and began his shorter commentary on the Pentateuch.

From Italy, Ibn Ezra went to France visiting various cities. Thus, we find him in 1155 in Rhodez where he composed many books on mathematics and astronomy. A year later, we find him in Dreux, Northern France, and there he completed his commentaries on Daniel, Psalms, and the minor prophets and also began to compose his longer commentary on the Pentateuch. From Dreux, he went to England, making on the way the acquaintance of the great Talmudic scholar, Jacob Tam. An exchange of scintillating short poems between these two intellectual giants shows the respect they entertained for each other. During these years of wandering in France, Ibn Ezra learned of the death of his only son, Isaac, in distant Bagdad, and he mourned over him greatly. But depressed as he was, he never for a moment ceased writing, ever composing new books. The years 1158–60, he spent in London, where he wrote several books among which is also the letter on the Sabbath (Iggereth ha-Shaboth) against the interpretation of Samuel ben Meir (above Sect. 110) of the first verses of Genesis according to which the day begins with the morning and not with the preceding evening. Ibn Ezra feared the danger of such a theory, which may induce people to reckon the beginning of the Sabbath from Saturday morning and not from sunset on Friday. He retraced his steps to the Continent, again visiting France, staying for a time at Narbonne in the Provence and ultimately went back to Rhodez where he lived for a few years, finishing his second recension of the Pentateuch commentary. From there he intended to return to his native land, but on reaching Calahorra on the boundary of Spain he died at the age of seventy-five, in the year 1167, satiated with wandering and suffering.

The industry and literary productivity of Ibn Ezra is remarkable. He is said to have written one hundred eight books covering almost all fields of knowledge known in his day, and some of his books, especially his commentaries, were written in several recensions. However, great as he was in other fields, his fame rests on his Exegesis, and he is primarily known in the Jewish world as a commentator though his laurels as a poet (Ch. X) are by no means faded as yet.

He seemed to have written commentaries to all the books of the Bible but we have only his commentaries to the Pentateuch, including two recensions to the Book of Exodus, Isaiah, Minor Prophets, Psalms, Job, Daniel, and the Five Scrolls. The commentaries to the other books were lost.

Ibn Ezra's commentaries, though composed far from Spain, represent the very height of Spanish Exegesis, for not only has he made use of all earlier Spanish commentators, drawing even upon Karaite Exegetes whom he quotes by name, but he has brought to bear all the accumulated knowledge in the fields of grammar, language study, and exegesis of the Jews of Spain, upon the task in his hand. In his Hebrew written commentaries, the spirits of the great Masters of Hebrew study, who themselves wrote in Arabic, found their redemption and became known to the great Jewish world. But, we must not by any means consider Ibn Ezra a mere mediator and transmitter of the ideas of those who have gone before him, On the other hand, it is his own fine sense of exegesis and keen understanding of the nature and character of the Hebrew language which make his commentaries so valuable, though he utilized to a very great extent the works of his predecessors. In his two introductions to the commentary on the Pentateuch, he defines his method of exegesis by contrasting it with other previous methods. "The truth," he says, "is like the central point in a circle," but the commentators of the Bible have all gone astray, some in a line far flung from it, some in a line approaching it, yet seldom touching the very point! The ways the commentators followed are four. The first, is that of the Gaonim, who in their eagerness to find in the Bible all philosophic ideas have gone far afield and brought in all kinds of unnecessary digressions on irrelevant matters. The second, is the way of the Karaites who forsook tradition and wandered far away from the truth. The third, is the way of the Allegorists—by that he meant the Christian commentators—, and the fourth way, that of the Darshonim, homiletists and Agadists, though close to the truth, yet is not satisfactory. Against these, he outlines his own method which is that of pure Peshat, the plain meaning of the words according to the science of language and the connection of the verses. He proposes to first explain the single words, elucidating their derivation and grammatical difficulties, and then give the connected meaning of the verse independent of any Midrashic interpretation. Only in such verses where precepts are stated does he follow Talmudic tradition of the Halakah, but nowhere else.

This program he carried out to a great extent though not fully. In a number of commentaries, he does give the meaning of the words first and then the meaning of the verse. In others, he disregarded the method. In spite of his denunciation of the Gaonic method of digressions, he himself has a number of lengthy digressions which at times amount to whole essays on certain subjects. Here and there, he also uses mystic allegory and a good deal of polemics, especially against the Karaites. But on the whole, he lived up to his standard. His grammatical remarks are elucidating, the explanation brief and penetrating, and with the exception of a few points, he does not deviate from the traditional interpretation as far as Halakah is concerned.

Otherwise, his commentary is penetrated by a very fine spirit, and he displays great critical acumen. He thought Job a translated book and gave some hints that the Chapters XL–LXVI of Isaiah were written during the Babylonian exile, and also that some Psalms are of later origin. His free spirit is especially evident in the hints he dropped concerning the later origin of some chapters or passages even in the Pentateuch to which hints Spinoza called attention. But all such remarks were veiled by him in mystical language so that we can hardly be sure of their exact meaning. Notwithstanding all his free remarks, and hints, Ibn Ezra was a conservative and defended vigorously the sanctity of the Torah against all its attackers, championed the intergrity of the text and attacked Ibn Janach vehemently for his proposed assumption, that some other words should be substituted instead of those written in the text in certain difficult passages.

Though Ibn Ezra was a great master of Hebrew as evidenced in his poetry, his style in the commentary is not lucid. It is witty, often scintillating, but not clear. He leaves many things unsaid, and very often uses the formula, "There is a mystery involved here." Under this cloak, he smuggled in many of his freer thoughts, but as they are not explicit, we can not guess at their real meaning, in spite of the super-commentaries. Ibn Ezra, though a rationalist, had a mystic vein in him and was a great believer in astrology and in astral influence on human life. Even these beliefs are injected in his commentaries.

Yet, with all the defects, his commentary was held in esteem next to Rashi's, except that it was studied by the intellectuals. An acquaintance with Ibn Ezra was considered a mark of intellectual aristocracy, and the prying into his secrets (Sodoth) and mysteries a favorite diversion with Jewish scholars. As a result, we have a number of super-commentaries on his works, which proved their popularity in learned circles.

114. THE KIMHI COMMENTATORS

Just as the Kimhi family in the Provence took the lead in grammar and language study (Ch. VII), they likewise led in Bible exegesis. The father, Joseph, wrote commentaries on Proverbs and Job. His commentary on Proverbs is of the nature of a moral treatise, as he endeavors, besides explaining the meaning, to derive a moral from each proverb, and for this purpose, he cites parallels from Arabic literature which make his explanations interesting. He also wrote commentaries to the Pentateuch and other books of the Bible but they were lost. However, from the quotations mentioned by his son, David, in his own commentary, we can conclude that they were of great exegetic value. His remarks are very keen and a good number of them are adopted by modern scholars and incorporated in their Bible translations. Of Moses Kimhi's commentaries, we possess those to Job, Proverbs, and Ezra and Nehemiah. The last three, however, are printed under the name of Ibn Ezra, which shows us how closely he followed the method of the former that they could be interchanged. The one on Proverbs is an excellent commentary and is deserving of the name of the assumed author.

The greatest exegete of the family, like the greatest grammarian, was David (1160–1235). He lived in Narbonne all his life and was a teacher of Talmud and Bible. Besides his linguistic and exegetic studies, he was also deeply interested in philosophy and was a great follower of Maimonides whom he defended vigorously in the controversy about his books (Ch. X).

He commented upon all the prophetic books and in addition, Psalms, Chronicles, and the book of Genesis. David took his exegetic work very seriously, and in his introduction, he speaks of it as a religious duty, and considers it as the second class of good deeds (Massim Tobim). His method, like his father's and brothers', approached that of Ibn Ezra, following the Peshat. But he also often accepted the Derash utilizing Agadic interpretations to a great extent. Like Rashi, he made extensive use of the Targum. His grammatical knowledge helped him greatly in his exegesis, and much of it is embodied in the commentary. As a follower of Maimonides, he introduces some philosophic views in his commentaries and explains some events as visions. In his commentary to Ezekiel, Ch. I, he offers a long philosophic explanation of the Theophany (Visions of the Merkabah). His commentary on Psalms contains many controversial passages against Christianity which passages were later collected and published separately under the title of Teshuboth La Notzerim (Answers to the Christians).

His style is lucid and brief. David's commentaries, both on account of their intrinsic value as well as on account of the spirit of piety permeating them, were ranked very high, and the Radak (abbreviation of Rabbi David Kimhi), as it is usually called, was placed next to Rashi and Ibn Ezra. As a matter of fact, Kimhi's commentary at times took precedence, for in the early printed Hebrew Bibles with commentaries, Rashi and Radak were the only two commentaries.

Chapter IX

POETRY

115. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The origin of Mediæval Hebrew poetry, like many other literary productions, goes back to the Bible. The Psalms, Canticles, parts of the book of Job, of Ecclesiastes, and numerous passages in the Prophets and historical books, and even in the Pentateuch itself are all of a high poetic caliber, though they do not possess the usual earmarks of poetry, rhyme and meter. In the Psalms, the individual pours out his heart before his Maker, or the poet being overcome by the grandeur and beauty of the Universe sings the praises of the great Artificer, or again, the singer when stirred to the depths of his soul by the suffering of his nation cries out to God on their behalf calling for protection from the enemies, or pleading for the mighty hand of the Lord to appear once more, as in the days of yore—all these are specimens of noble lyrics and in time served as prototypes for later Jewish poetry.

The whole range of Mediæval Hebrew poetry can be divided into two main divisions, sacred and secular, and although the division is not of equal proportions, the sacred predominating, yet the secular element is well represented. It is, of course, the sacred poetry which has the Bible as its antecedent, the secular, on the other hand, is almost purely a product of this period, a result of the contact with the Arabic culture and changed conditions of life, though not wholly so.

Still, even the sacred poetry of this period is not the direct descendant of Biblical poetry, there were many more factors in its production. Between the rise of Mediæval sacred poetic productions and the Bible there lay a period of one thousand years and a vast multifarious literature. There is the Jewish liturgy which gradually began to assume shape and form during the centuries, there is the great production of Agada in its ramified branches, and finally, there is the renewed interest in the Bible and its language, all this vast literature of language study and exegesis which brought about the revival of Hebrew. These factors combined made the appearance of sacred poetry possible.

First as to liturgy. It is almost an impossibility to give a connected story of the Jewish liturgy, many of its links being hidden in the dimness of the ages. It is only a bare outline of its growth that we can possibly hope to draw. During the period of the first Commonwealth, prayer was left entirely to the individual, it was a spontaneous affair on his part. Whenever one desired, he offered a prayer according to the needs of the moment. Such individual prayers we find of Hannah (I Samuel, Ch. II, 1–11), of David (2 Samuel, Ch. XXII, I Chronicles, Ch. XXIX, 10–20), of Solomon (1 Kings, Ch. VIII, 22–64), and many more. Likewise, many of the Psalms are in reality prayers. There are only two short obligatory prayers mentioned in the Pentateuch which had a fixed form, and these are: the prayer recited by those who brought their first fruits to the Temple and the one pronounced by each Jew at the end of the third year of each seven-year cycle when all separations of tithes were completed (Deut. XXVI, 5–15).

It is with the period of the Second Temple that the liturgy began to assume a definite shape and form. It was then, that the religious feeling of every individual Jew clamored for daily expression. We are therefore told that the men of the Great Synagogue instituted the three daily services, but we are not informed exactly of the nature of the prayers recited at these services. From indications in the Talmud, we learn that the reading of the Shema (Deut. VI, 4–10; XI, 13–22, and Numbers XV, 37–41) and six more benedictions, formed the nucleus of the liturgy. These passages and a few more Biblical passages such as the Ten Commandments were originally recited, in the early times, at the Temple. But as time went on, the religious feeling clamored for more expression, more prayers, and benedictions were added before and after the Shema, thanking God for the creation of light and describing His greatness. By the end of the period of the Second Temple, the liturgy is much enlarged and the Mishnah tells us of a number of prayers that were offered on special days, such as the Sabbath, and especially on the Day of Atonement and other fast days. Of the prayers recited on the Day of Atonement we have a few transmitted to us, such as the confessions of the High Priest, and his prayer on behalf of the Jewish people, enumerating their various needs. It is a fine vigorous prayer remarkable for its brevity. There are also a number of benedictions given which were recited on that day as well as on the other fast days. In these benedictions, pleas for forgiveness of sins and for help in need are expressed.

With the destruction of the Temple and the concentration of the Jewish spirit within the study of the Torah and observation of religion, the intensity of the Jewish feeling clamored for more expression, and the liturgy begins to develop more extensively. It becomes not only a substitute for the sacrificial service, but the expression of the soul of the nation, and the national character of prayer begins to be asserted. The sufferings of the Jews in exile begin to be heard, and the cry for redemption reverberates through it. Immediately after the destruction of the Temple, at the Sanhedrin in Jabne, the eighteen benedictions (Shemonah Esre), next to the Shema the most important prayer in our prayer book, are instituted and standardized, by the order of Raban Gamaliel, the president of the Academy. In this prayer, the national needs take precedence over the individual, though the latter are by no means neglected. But though the name of the organizer of this prayer is given (Simon Hapkuli) it is by no means an individual composition. His work consisted more in incorporating older prayers and standardizing their style and form, than in composing new ones. Not only were the six benedictions recited in the Temple incorporated, but the majority of the benedictions were adaptations from current prayers for various occasions. Only one benediction is named after an individual, and that is the one against heretics and informers (birkath ha-Minim) composed by Samuel the younger (Solmuel ha-Katon). From that time on the liturgy developed rapidly.

In the Talmudic period, many additions were made. Especially fertile in this field was Babylonia. There the great scholars, the founders of the Talmud, busied themselves with composing hymns and prayers. Rab (Ch. V), the founder of the Jewish center of learning in Babylon, left us the series of beautiful prayers for the Musaph service of the New Year's Day, where such beautiful hymns as *Alenu* and the second part "Therefore we hope to Thee" are found. In these hymns pure conception of God and fervent hope for His Kingdom are expressed. Many more anonymous prayers were composed there and in Palestine, such as the series of liturgical pieces prefacing the beginning of the Shemonah Esre for New Year's and the Day of Atonement, the first of which is "Lord impose Thine awe" where a plea for unity of mankind and the abolition of evil from the world is entered. These are only a few of the numbers of prayers that were composed during that period. There are many individual prayers that scholars used to recite for themselves daily before their study, which on account of their loftiness of spirit became the property of the nation and were later incorporated in the liturgy, thus we have one such prayer by Rabbi Johanan (Ch. V), others by Rab and others.

The spirit of this growing liturgy is of a multifarious nature. It not only expresses the needs of the individual on every occasion, on the one hand, and the state of mind of the nation on the other hand, but also the most innermost religious feelings of those who were God intoxicated. It recites the praise of God in hymns, it tells of His glory in doxologies, and dwells on the littleness of man as compared with the Author of all being. The prayers are as a rule written in Hebrew and are tinged with poetic touches. They thus constitute real literary productions, and the ideas and spirit permeating them were the basis for the later sacred poetry.

The second source is the Agada. That great production of the Jewish spirit, the ways of which were described above, contains whether in description of historic events or in depicting the miseries of the Jewish people, or in painting the glories of the future, many poetic elements expressed in delicate and fine language, and very often it contains also liturgical pieces which are placed in the mouths of the heroes depicted or in any other connection. These prayers are distinguished by their form, as they very often paraphrase the Bible or use Biblical lines in an interwoven way. All these poetic attempts influenced directly the liturgy and later the sacred poetry. Not only were some of these prayers or parts of the prayers incorporated in the regular liturgy, but they evoked a desire for imitation and even for improvement. Many of the prayers of the liturgy are also distinguished by the tenderness of language borrowed from the Agada.

The Gaonic period produced a number of liturgical pieces which were either incorporated in the older parts of the liturgy or constituted mere additions. These pieces are composed in the older poetical form already found in the Bible, namely, the alphabetical order of words or sentences. They stand then midway between the liturgy and the sacred poetry. Of such nature are the beautiful hymns "El Adon" in the Sabbath prayer, "El Boruch" in the week-day morning prayer and many more.

But still greater was the influence of the *content* of the Agada. The historical Agada which made it its purpose to embellish the lives of the heroes, or events of the past, or the glories of the future supplied the epic elements for the later sacred poetry. The love for the Jewish people, the yearning for redemption, the glorification of God and the Torah, all these which were the very substratum of Agada were later elaborated in poetry. And even the very method, the simile, the mashal, the parable were all borrowed and elaborated upon.

Finally, the third factor, the revival of Hebrew and the great intensive study of the language and its construction, supplied the matter for poetry and brought it to its highest bloom especially in Spain.

The sacred poetry of the period represents many shades which however are included under one name, that of *Piut,* the writers of which are called Paitanim, both names come directly from the Greek, *poietria* and *poietes.* These names were already used in the early Midrashim to designate that particular art and its producers. In general, we may distinguish in that great mass of *Piutim* two main types: the Palestinian-West-European, including the Italian, French and German productions, on the one hand, and the Babylonian-Spanish on the other. The former type is not only the earlier, but the more primitive, the more intense, and the more national. The second one is the more developed, the more refined, and we may even say the more individual. Rappoport has aptly characterized in one sentence the great difference between these two types by saying: "The Sephardic sacred poetry is the medium of expression for the soul of the individual Jew, the go-between, between it and its Maker, while the Italian Franco-German Piut is the go-between, between Israel and God." This applies, of course, in a general way, exceptions in both cases abound.

The springs which fed this great stream of poetry during the ages were two: first, the deep religious emotion which broke all bounds, and second, the suffering of the nation. It arose as an expression of an overflowing soul which is desperately struggling to articulate its emotions towards God and not finding sufficiency in ordinary language. The established prayers were not considered enough, each gifted man wanted to add something of his own, hence the hymns, poems, and the doxologies, and many more forms of Piut.

But in spite of the religious emotions of the writers and their desires to express it, these are not individual vagaries. On the contrary, like the Psalms they express the spirit of the nation. And this spirit, as said, was two-sided. At times, it broke forth in pæans of praise singing the glory of the great God, and at times, it was a turbulent spirit, one tortured in the very fires of Hell. Sacred poetry then represents the voice of a nation which sees itself hemmed in on all sides, living in constant terror of oppression, and in its anguish, it cries to the only protector—its Father in Heaven. The synagogue was the only place of safety for the Jew. There, he expressed his bitter protest against his oppressors, and also voiced the hope for redemption. Suffering and the cry for redemption, these are the two notes running through the entire mass of sacred poetry.

Suffering is practically the very woof of the life of the Jews during the entire Mediæval period, and without understanding even partially its extent and intensity, we can hardly appreciate that life. The words of Zunz, give us an inkling of the depth of that suffering. Says Zunz, "Were there a ladder of suffering, then Israel would have reached the highest rung on it. If burning pain, and the patience to suffer can ennoble a people, then the palm of nobility goes to the Jews. If a literature is said to be rich, when it possesses a few tragical classical plays, what place shall we assign then to a tragedy which has lasted for fifteen hundred years and which is composed and acted by the very heroes of the tragedy itself?"[1] The echo of this tragedy reverberates through Mediæval Hebrew poetry.

Yet as stated, the Jew did not always cry and protest, he never lost faith in his God and expressed his love and exaltation for Him in noble poems. Sacred poetry is therefore divided into two classes: (*a*) Piut in a narrower sense such as hymns of praise, doxologies wherein God is glorified in philosophical terms, and otherwise religious lyrics where man pours forth his heart before his Maker, as well as historical epics eulogizing God's miraculous wonders in Jewish history. (*b*) Selichoth, penitential prayers which include all kinds of poems of a plaintive as well as of a devotional nature. Together with it go also the *Kinoth,* elegies for the day of the commemoration of the destruction of the Temple, the ninth of Ab, or other black-letter days in Jewish History.

116. THE FORMS OF HEBREW POETRY

The basic and the oldest form of Hebrew poetry that we find, is the parallelism of thought according to which each verse is divided into two halves and where the thought of the second half runs parallel to the first except that it is expressed in different words. It is really a kind of rhyme, but not of words only of thought. This form is used in several modifications and is the most frequent in the Bible. The Psalms,

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[1] L. Zunz: Die Synogogale Poesie des Mittel Alters, p. 9.

Proverbs, Job, and large parts of the prophetic books are written in this way. Of actual word rhymes we find little in the Bible except occasionally. But by the side of the parallelism, we find the use of a more artificial poetic form affecting the construction of the words proper, and this is the alphabetical or the acrostic.

(*a*) The alphabetical form is then the first or the earliest form of Jewish poetry. We find, as said, its use in the Bible. Many chapters in Psalms are arranged according to the Hebrew alphabet each verse beginning with a letter of the alphabet. At times, the alphabet is doubled or tripled and even used eight times, namely, instead of one verse beginning with a letter two or three or eight begin with the same letter, and so successively until the alphabet is repeated several times. Thus, we have the third chapter of Lamentations where the triple alphabet is used, and the famous Psalm CXIX where the alphabet is used eight times.

It is no wonder then that the early liturgical poetry seized first upon this form and exploited it to its fullest extent. Not only was the alphabet repeated a number of times, but various combinations were used. At times, the reverse alphabet is used, namely, instead of beginning with the *Aleph,* the *Tau* is placed first and the reversed order of the alphabet is followed. The form is named in Hebrew Tashrak, i. e. *Tav, Shin, Resh, Kuf,* the successive order of the reversed alphabet. This form, both the straight alphabet and the reverse is used extensively in early poetical liturgy incorporated in the prayer book as well as in many early *Piutim.* In fact, it is the most frequent one, and persisted through the ages even when rhyme and meter were introduced. Later, more artificial combinations were introduced, the alphabet was divided into two groups, eleven letters each, and the verses or the words alternate, the first beginning with a letter of the first, and the second with the last of the second group. Thus, the first with Aleph, the second with Tau, and so on (At-Bash, i. e. Aleph, Tau, Beth, Shin, etc.). There are other fancy combinations of letters which are too many and too complicated to enumerate.

(*b*) Another frequent poetic form is that of name acrostics. About the middle of the seventh century, poems appear which are arranged according to the letters of the names of the authors, so that the initials of the verses or words spell out the names of the poets. As names are not too long as a rule, so for longer poems the names of the Fathers with titles were added. Later, the patronymics were added, such as Cohen, Levi, and still later, even the occupation or social status, such as Rophe, i. e. physician, Hazan, cantor, or Parnas, community leader, and all these nicknames and many others were spelled out in poems. In this, as in the previous form, many fancy uses were made, sometimes names of relatives were introduced in addition to the names of the author and his fathers, at times, the name of the child of the author is used, with an additional blessing such as, May he live, or may he increase in the study of the Torah and performance of precepts (Yigdal Betorah Uv'mitzvah). That these additions prolonged the poems goes without saying.

(*c*) As poetry kept on developing, it felt the need of a stronger form, and this is of course found in the rhyme which is almost considered the very external essence of poetry. The Bible uses rhymes occasionally, and a still more extensive use of rhymes is found in Talmudic literature, in many Agadic passages and early prayers. When poetry developed, especially in the Gaonic period, the use of the rhyme becomes frequent and almost universal. The influence of Arabic poetry contributed much towards its extensive use. The Arabs delight in rhymes, and they use them even in prose. The Jews followed them, and the Hebrew language which is rich in like-sounding suffixes gave them ample opportunity to develop the art of rhyming to its extreme. But here we see the division between the two main currents of Hebrew poetry, the Palestinian-West-European, and the Babylonian-Spanish. The former use mostly one single monotonous rhyme which is repeated continually. The latter have not only used different rhymes, but introduced many various forms and combinations in rhyming. In general, there are three kinds of rhymes: (*1*) When only the last syllables in the two lines rhyme, this is the lowest form. (2) Then comes the two-syllable rhyme which was considered more deserving, and finally, (*3*) the three-syllable rhyme which was called the praised or the aristocratic one. At times, they developed a more artistic form where not only all the syllables of the last words of the lines rhymed but the very same final word was repeated in each line and often it was continued through hundreds of lines. It was, of course, a monotonous rhyme but considered a great art, if one could prolong it, and poets vied with each other in prolonging that form of rhyme. Variations were introduced in the placing of the rhyme. The simplest form was the successive rhyme where each two lines had a rhyme, the more complicated had the alternating rhyme, namely, the first line rhymed with the third and the second with the fourth, and there were many more combinations.

There was also some fancy rhyming where one rhyme is repeated at the end of each strophe, consisting of seven rhymed verses. This was borrowed from the Arabs and at times, this fancy rhyming in general was called in Hebrew Anak, i.e. a necklace, for the rhyming was compared to the stringing together of pearls, and the rhyme was named Haruz which means a string of pearls. Hence, an artistic poem was called a necklace, where fine workmanship is displayed, and very often one large pearl is set among smaller pearls. Thus we have the name Anak applied to the large poem of Ibn Gabirol on Grammar, to the fancy poems of Moses Ibn Ezra and others. There are also other forms of this general Mosaic style. At times, a Biblical verse is taken apart, and a word from it is placed in the rhyme at the end of a strophe, at other times, it is a sentence from a prayer which is placed in a similar manner. There are also poems which have a peculiar rhyme inasmuch as each two lines end with the same word, but in different meanings. Such poems were called Taganis in Arabic and were used by great master poets who had the entire Hebrew language at their command. In the later period, double rhymes were used, namely, each line was divided into halves and these also rhymed with each other but this is a later development which came only after the introduction of the meter.

(*d*) The meter was introduced in Hebrew poetry in the tenth century by the grammarian Dunash ben Labrat in Spain. He borrowed it from Arabic poetry, but only the idea and not the form, The Hebrew meter is very simple and consists of two basic forms, (*1*) measured vowels, namely, an equal number of vowels in each line, and (2) vowels to which a consonant is prefixed, namely, the sheva mobile (Sheva Na). The first one corresponds to the spondaic and the second one to the iambic, The second is called Yated, i.e. a peg, on account of the Sheva being joined to the following vowels as the peg is joined to the wall. The Sheva quiescent (Shevah Nach) was considered as a part of a plain vowel. The plain vowel is considered as long and the Yated with the following vowel as short-long. It happened very seldom that poems were either entirely with voweled letters (Tenuoth) or entirely with Yated, i.e. Sheva mobile and voweled letters. When either form was used it was called a simple poem. Usually, it was a compounded or mixed one, namely, Yated and Tenuah, or several Tenuoth, or several Yatedim and many more Tanuoth. From this simple meter, there arose a large number of combinations, so that we have as a result nineteen different meters, and some even count as many as fifty-two.

The poem was divided into strophes named bait, i. e. a house as each strophe expresses a certain thought, and is supposed to be complete. The line was divided into two halves, the first half called deleth, i. e. door, meaning by it that it opens the door to the verse, the second half was called soger, namely, the closing half. The two halves sometimes run their own rhyme, and thus the two halves of the line also rhyme. The strophes were at times longer, and at times shorter, some poems contain strophes of four lines and some of six or more. At times the first strophe is used as a refrain. Such poems are called by a technical name pismon, which is variously derived from the Greek and from Aramaic and from Arabic, but the meaning is clear—response. This kind of poem is mostly used in sacred poetry as the congregation was expected to chant the refrain.

The metrical measures and their various combinations were mostly used by the Spanish school both in their secular poems as well as in the sacred. The West-European poets, or what we would call the Paitanim (in contradistinction to the Spanish who deserve the name poets) employed the meter but little. As a rule, they follow the older forms, acrostics of name and of alphabet, though they used rhyme to a great extent.

We have thus far viewed the origins of the Mediæval Hebrew poetry, the factors that brought it about, and the external forms it assumed. We will now turn to the poetry itself, follow its development in the various centers of Jewish literature.

A. PALESTINIAN SACRED POETS

117. EARLY PALESTINIAN POETRY

As in other literary productions, such as we have seen above in regard to Agada and Masorah, Palestine took the lead even in the days of its decline, so it was in the field of sacred poetry. As the veil of mystery which hung over Palestine in the early Mediæval centuries is gradually being lifted by the patient labors of many Jewish scholars, its literary activity is being revealed to us. There, the national Jewish spirit, though bowed down by oppression, was still at work. And if the mind weighed down by the tribulation could not devote itself to the difficult Halakah, then the heart gave vent to its feelings, the accumulated bitterness and agony had to find expression, the deep religious feeling which increased in intensity with every new persecution had to become articulate; when the way of Agada was exploited to its fullest extent, the prayer book became the next vehicle for these feelings and emotions.

We have already pointed out the first shoots of sacred poetry which found their way into the prayer book itself (Sect. 113) and became a part of the liturgy proper. But these were soon followed by others which on account of their number as well as their forms were not incorporated in the prayer book, but were considered as additions. We can not determine with accuracy when these Piutim began to be composed, but somewhere in the dim sixth and seventh centuries when the revival of Hebrew (Ch. VII) took place, they began to make their appearance.

These first attempts at sacred poetry are as a rule anonymous, and are written in alphabetical acrostics, either in a single alphabet or double or triple. Little or no rhyme was employed. But what they lack in form, they make up in purity of style and beauty of content. The style is pure Hebrew, and the content is of a philosophic-poetic character. There might have been many such pieces, but only a few have come down to us, and these few are distinguished by their nobility of spirit. The poem, "Thou Understandest the Thoughts of the Heart," which is an admonition (Tochecha) to man to remember the shortness of life and his ultimate destination, gives a very graphic description of shortcomings of the life of man from his earliest days to the last. It is of a high moral tone, and it calls upon man to utilize the few days allotted him for justice, charity, and the coming nearer to God. A translation of the noble poem, "And the World Shall Come to Serve Thee," is here given.

All the world shall come to serve thee
  And bless Thy glorious Name,
And Thy righteousness triumphant
The islands shall acclaim.
And the peoples shall go seeking
  Who knew Thee not before,
And the ends of the earth shall praise Thee,
  And tell Thy greatness o'er.

They shall build for Thee their altars,
  Their idols overthrown,
And their graven gods shall shame them,
  As they turn to Thee alone.
They shall worship Thee at sunrise,
  And feel Thy kingdom's might,
And impart their understanding
  To those astray in night.

They shall testify Thy greatness,
  And of Thy power speak
And extol Thee, shrined, uplifted
  Beyond man's highest peak.
And with reverential homage,
  Of love and wonder born,
With the ruler's crown of beauty
  Thy head they shall adorn.

With the coming of Thy kingdom
  The hills shall break into song,
And the islands laugh exultant
  That they to God belong.
And all their congregations
  So loud Thy praise shall sing,
That the uttermost peoples, hearing,
  Shall hail Thee crowned King.

This poem which is used in Musaph service on the day of Atonement, is a veritable gem in religious literature, as it expresses a passionate desire for the Kingdom of God to be realized not in any mystic way but in the spread of knowledge of pure religious belief throughout the world. There is a universal ring to it.

118. JOSE BEN JOSE HA-YATOM

But the period of anonymity did not last for a long time, Soon there arose poets who left the impress of their personality on their production and their name was left to posterity. The earliest of these is Jose ben Jose ha-Yatom (c. 600–640) (the orphan), he was therefore named after his father. Jose ben Jose's style is still a pure Hebrew, and his poems are as yet without rhyme, except occasionally. He uses, however, the alphabetical acrostic in a multiple way, six and seven times and also other artful devices such as alliteration and the repetition, at the end of each strophe, of one or two words which epitomize the subject, such as the word *Kingship,* in his poem to New Year's, Kingship prayers (Malkeiyoth) in the Musaph service, or *Remembrance* in his poem to the Remembrance prayer (Zikronoth) in the same service. His poems are distinguished by the epic spirit. Not only God alone is his subject, but God and His manifestations in Jewish history. He, therefore, recites in his pieces the outstanding episodes in Jewish History. Especially beautiful is his epic poem known as the Abodah which is recited in the Musaph service of the Day of Atonement. The main theme is the High Priest's service in the Temple on that day (Abodah), but it is prefixed with a long introduction telling of the main events that had transpired in this world, beginning with creation and ending with the consecration of Aaron as High Priest. In stately lines we are told of the wonders of creation, the story of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Deluge, Tower of Babel, Deeds of the Patriarchs, and Moses and Aaron. He then goes on with his main theme. The pure religious and poetic spirit of Jose ben Jose can be seen from the following lines taken from his poem to the Abodah:

His creatures break forth in a song divine;
   His praises resound from deep to sky;
   One God on earth, All-Holy on High.
The waters proclaim: "All glory is Thine."

From below, the abyss pealeth forth with might;
   The luminaries, all join in His laud;
   The days declare the glory of God
And sweet melodies arise from the night.

Jose was the first to interweave Agadic interpretations and embellishments in his poems, though to a slight degree. We have beside the Abodah also the poems to the Musaph service of New Year's Day referred to above, and a few more.

119. JANAI

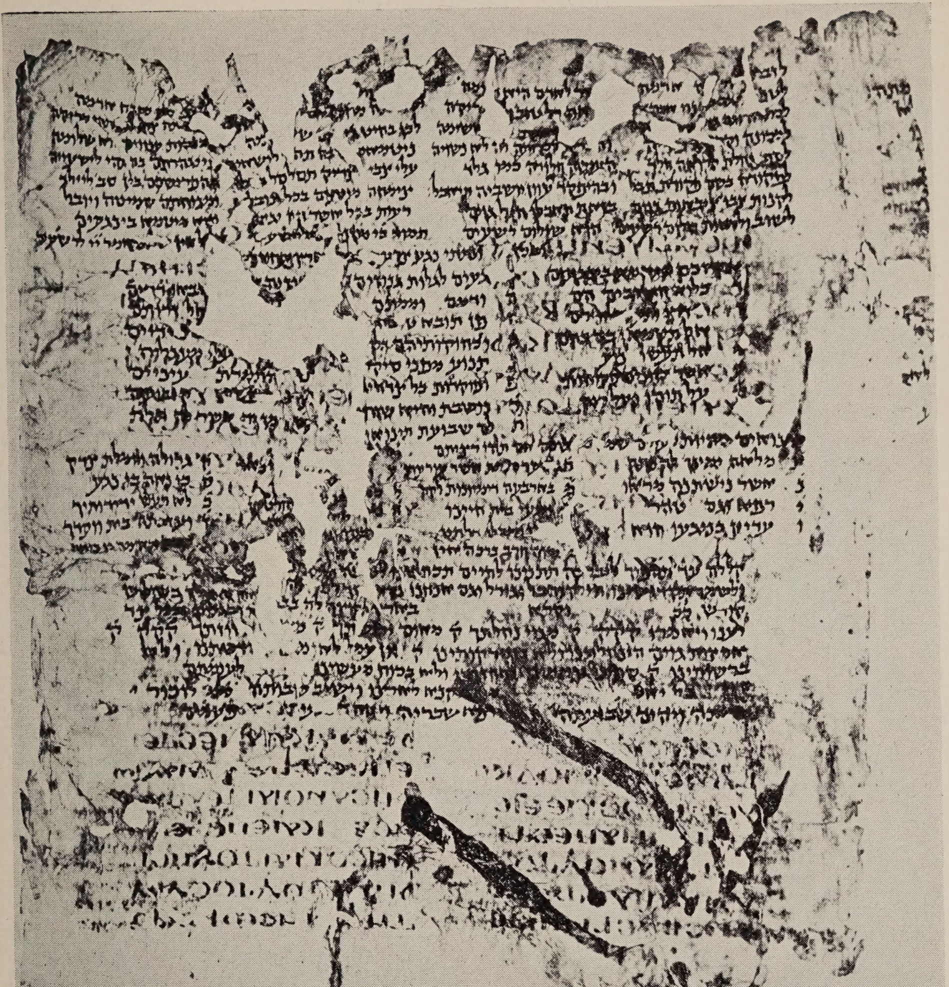
Jose ben Jose was followed by Janai (about 640). He was the first to use the rhyme in addition to the alphabetic acrostic. He also introduced the name acrostic and left a few poems with his name indicated in the beginning of the strophes. For a long time his poems were lost, with the exception of two, one to the Shemonah Esre on the Great Sabbath before Passover, and the song "And thus it happened at midnight" which is recited on Passover night at the Seder. Recently, Dr.

Davidson discovered a whole cycle (Maschsor) of his poems for the Sabbaths of the entire year. From these it is seen that Janai broke the new path of interweaving Halakic and Agadic matters into poems. It showed skill but detracted from the poetic spirit, and besides the multitude of the thoughts expressed required an expansion of the language. He therefore, took to coining new verbal forms and new words. This process undoubtedly enriched the language, but he hardly observed any rules in his coinage, so that the purity of the language suffered.

120. ELIESER BEN KALIR

The greatest of all these Palestinian poets was Elieser ben Kalir, or as he is usually known, The Kalir. He is not only one of the most prolific Paitanim, but he really left his impress upon the entire Italian-Franco-German school which followed in his footsteps and imitated him. He wrote poems to all festival services, to the special Sabbath services, to Purim and Hanukah services, as well as elegies to the Ninth of Ab, and in general there is hardly an important service to which he has not added his poems. On account of his importance, legends clustered around his name. The earlier scholars thought that he hailed from different lands, some thought him a Babylonian, and some placed him in Southern Italy, taking the name Kalir to be a mispronunciation of Caligiari, a city in Southern Italy. Others, on the other hand, considered him a Palestinian but elevated him to the rank of a Tanna. The truth is that he is a Palestinian, but lived much later than the Tannaim, about the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century.

Kalir is one of the first Paitanim who, in the impetuosity of the spirit and in his eagerness to express all that he had to say, deviated from the purity of the Hebrew language and intermixed with it not only a large number of Aramaic words but also coined a multitude of new words, and used new forms which are not in accordance with the rules of Hebrew grammar. He also drew much upon the Agada, interweaving its stories, interpretations, and parables into his poems. At times, he merely referred to an Agadic statement or interpretation leaving the reader to guess for himself. It is this characteristic which make many of his poems obstruse and difficult to understand. He used rhyme, alphabetic and name acrostics, and paid much attention to alliteration. He evinced great skill in bending the language to his will and purpose, and at times wrote poems consisting of one jingle of



A fragment of Mahzor Jannai, Hebrew writing of the XI Century, on a sixth century manuscript of Aquila's translation of the Bible.
(From Burkitt's *Aquila.*)

rhymes, namely, rhyming every pair of words in the entire strophe. The Kalir was much berated by the Spanish poets who could not forgive the barbarism of his style and his breaking of all rules of grammar. His great critic is Ibn Ezra. Yet, he cannot be denied strength of poetic spirit. Like Jose ben Jose, he possesses ability for epic poetry, and several of his poems are fine epic productions, of which the one before Kedushah (see Sect. 128) in the New Year's second day morning service where the life of Abraham is especially described, can serve as a fair example. He also had a fine observing eye for the beauties of nature. In his poem to the *Geshem* (rain) service of the Shemini Azereth, eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacle when prayers for rain are offered, a sublime poetic description of the descending rain is given, the swift flight of the clouds, the opening of their mouths to receive water, the tossing of the wind, the eagerness of the thirsty earth to receive the blessing of rain are graphically depicted. But, of course, Kalir is not primarily a nature poet, his theme is primarily God, His justice and wonders in both nature and history, especially Jewish history. He does not tire of speaking of God in many ways and phases, and is longing for the Great Day when the Kingdom of God is to come. He also dwells upon His justice and righteousness, and begs God to proclaim the Day of Judgment when the world court will be held. Of this court, Kalir gives a fine description, in his Kedushah poem on the first day of the New Year, how the earth will tremble and the wicked quake when God does come to judge, and that when the court will close and justice will be proclaimed, jubilation and shouting will break forth. The inseparable unity of God and Israel, the bitter fate of the Jewish people, their future and destiny find their full expression in the poems of Kalir. Kalir is the first of a line of poets who submerge their own individuality but speak on behalf of their nation.

B. Babylonian and Spanish Schools of Poetry

121. POETRY IN BABYLONIA

Just as in other literary productions, Babylonia followed Palestine and often even surpassed her, so it happened in the field of poetry with the exception, that this time it hardly equaled the former. As we have seen, the schools in Babylonia contributed greatly towards the development of the liturgy and that interest in this branch of literature was very high there. We must, therefore, assume that a number of anonymous sacred poems were composed in Babylonia. In fact, we find the Gaonim referring to a number of Piutim that are also known to us, which were recited there in the services in yet early times. With the rise of interest in the study of the Hebrew language and exegesis which came as a result of the contact with Arabic culture, poetry received a great impetus for development. Yet, the contribution of Babylonia to Hebrew poetry is not great. Only a few poets of note arose there. The first is Saadia Gaon. He, whose labors contributed so much to every branch of literature, also planted a few vines in the vast vineyard of Jewish poetry. We have a number of his Piutim and one lengthy "Admonition" (Tochecha) where the life of man from infancy to the grave is reviewed, its shortcomings pointed out, and contrasted with the greatness of God. The language is pure Hebrew and the poem is written in alphabetical acrostics, but the poetic spirit does not rise above the mediocre. Evidently, it is not given to one man to excel in everything. Another Gaon also distinguished himself as a poet, and this is Hai, the last of the line who in many ways resembles his illustrious predecessor. He left us a long didactic poem by the name of "Musar Haskel" (wise instruction) where he develops in measured verse his system of Ethics. The content will be discussed in the proper place. For the present, we will only note the new trend in Hebrew poetry which broke the liturgical bounds and began to spread in other directions. This was only the beginning, for its complete development and ramification, another place was destined and that was—Spain.

122. EARLY JEWISH POETRY IN SPAIN

The three centuries, from the ninth to the end of the twelfth, represent as we know the golden period of Jewish literature in Spain, and it is also of course, the period of bloom for Jewish poetry there. During this period, there arose poet after poet, one more exquisite than the other, yet the bloom and flourishing of Jewish poetry in Spain does not lie entirely in the greatness of the poets, but in its completeness and in its all-encompassing nature. It is a perfect expression of life in all its phases and shades. There is hardly a form of life which is not reflected in that poetry, it speaks with many tongues and touches all the strings of the heart, all emotions, the yearning for God, love, the feeling for beauty in nature, mirth, anger, and wrath, pain and sorrow, all find vent in it. In brief, it is completely secular as well as completely sacred.

Still the first steps of Jewish poetry in Spain were not rapid, they were rather slow. Poetry arose together with language study and exegesis, and the first two grammarians there, Menaham ben Saruk and Dunash ben Labrat, were also the pioneers in Hebrew poetry. Menahem was a master of Hebrew, but his style is heavy and he was not blessed with a poetic spirit. His poetry, from the little that is left to us, was of a more secular nature. Like the Arabs of his day, he wrote eulogies to great men, especially to his patron, Rabbi Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, elegies on the death of his friends, and other things of a similar nature. He also wrote rhymed prose; as samples of the kind of prose we have his letters of reproach to Hasdai which he sent from the prison, where he was placed by his former patron, and the letter to the King of the Khazars sent by Hasdai but written by Menahem. Both are excellent examples of fine writing. To Dunash belongs the honor of introducing the meter in Hebrew poetry. In sacred poetry, it was not used as often. Yet Dunash, though using rhyme and meter and perfect language, is hardly a poet as far as the content of his poems is concerned. He wrote a long grammatical poem as a refutation to Menahem's dictionary, the *Machbereth,* and a number of eulogies. He is also said to have written some sacred poems, but little is left of them.

The followers of Menahem and Dunash continued to write poetry on various subjects, on grammar, eulogies, epigrams, and dedicatory poems and even some sacred poetry. Thus, we have long grammatical poems by the pupils of Menahem (see Ch. VII) who wrote Responsa in verse to Dunash's refutations of the teaching of their master. These Responsa contain also dedicatory poems to Hasdai Ibn Shaprut. Likewise, the disciple of Dunash, Judah Ibn Shesheth wrote a refutation of the Responsa in verse. Joseph ben Abitur (about 992), who contended with Chanoch for the rabbinate in Cordova, wrote a number of sacred poems the style of which is pure and is permeated with a noble religious feeling, and there were a number of others who followed the muses with more or less success.

123. SAMUEL IBN NAGRILA

The first poet who deserves that name was Samuel Ibn Nagrila, also known as the prince (Nagid). He was born in 933 in Cordova but was forced to leave his native city along with other Jews in time of civil war (1013) and settled in Malaga, a city in the kingdom of Granada, occupying himself there as a storekeeper. His great learning attracted the attention of his neighbor, the Grand Vizier of the kingdom, and he engaged Samuel as his secretary and confidant. Shortly the Vizier died, and before his death he recommended Samuel to the king as the most suitable candidate for his place. The king listened to his advice and contrary to all precedents, he appointed the Jew, Samuel, as Grand Vizier of a Mohammedan kingdom. For twenty-eight years, Samuel piloted the ship of state of Granada under two kings with great skill and ability and won praise even from the Mohammedans. He became the leader of the Spanish Jewry, hence his name ha-Nagid (the prince) and he utilized his exalted position also to promote learning, inasmuch as he was a great patron of learning and supported poets, and writers in an exceedingly liberal way. He died in 1055.

Samuel, however, was not only a patron but was himself a great man of talent who contributed to Jewish literature in all its branches. We have seen above (Ch. VII) of his contribution to Hebrew grammar, and we will meet him again. As a poet, he ranks high. He wrote on various subjects, friendship poems, elegies, love and wine poems and also sacred poetry. He wrote three works imitating three Biblical books, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes under the names of ben Thilim (Son of Psalms), ben Mishle (Son of Proverbs), and ben Koheleth (Son of Ecclesiastes). The first contains prayers, the second, proverbs and didactic pieces, and the third, poems of a philosophical ring. Samuel uses both rhyme and meter, and his style is pure and strong. He possesses considerable wit in his epigrams and mirth in his wine poems. His poems bristle with fine thoughts, elegant expressions, and wise sayings, but his style, though strong, is not elastic, and at times is even obstruse.

Samuel, in the variety of his subjects and the richness of thought expressed in his poems as well as in the skillful use of language, was considered by the later poets as one who began a new period in Jewish poetry. This historian, Abraham Ibn Daud (see Sect. 191) says of Jewish poets that "they began to chirp in the days of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, but in the time of Samuel, their voices rang loud," meaning by it the poetic voice of Samuel which reverbrates in the history of Jewish poetry.

124. SOLOMON IBN GABIROL

The herald of the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry was Solomon Ibn Gabirol who rises in depth of poetic feeling, in mastery of style, and loftiness of thought, not only above the mediocre poets of his generation, but also above many generations of his successors, and probably has no equal in the entire range of Jewish poetry. His soul was one of those rare souls wherein depth of feeling, sense of beauty, and all-encompassing thought combine into one delicate Mosaic, and in whose light the world with all its beauties and the power beyond it are reflected. Unfortunately, the delicate fibres of this wonderful soul were too strained and twisted by the sad events of his tragic life, and this straining, at times, marred the harmonious tunes of the song which this soul emitted, so that we get here and there a false note in the otherwise perfect song.

His life was not only tragic but short. Ibn Gabirol was born in Malaga about the year 1021, and seemed to have lost his parents very early in life, and having neither brother nor sister, he thus remained a little waif in a strange world. This fact impressed his soul with sadness from his early youth. Added to this, he was attacked by a malignant illness which pursued him through life. It is no wonder then that notes of stinging bitterness and pessimism pervade some of his poems. Being thus deprived by force of circumstances from life's enjoyments, he threw himself with all the energy of his great mind into the acquisition of knowledge. When he was a mere youth, he was already great in all branches of learning of his time. When a mere boy, he moved to Saragossa which was then a center of Jewish learning, and there he began to write and compose his poetry. At sixteen, he was already a full-fledged poet of the first rank. Being morose, he had very few friends and led a very lonely life. For a time, he found a friend and patron in Yekutiel Ibn Al-Hasan, but unfortunately the friend was soon snatched away from him, being killed in an uprising. This second loss embittered Gabirol still more, and the sadness of his nature took on a darker color. Samuel Hanagid befriended him for a few years but through an impetuosity on the poet's part, the friendship broke and he remained alone in the world again, and was even attacked by his enemies who were envious of his greatness. The constant strain of his tragic life, ultimately broke his fragile body and he died at Valencia in the year 1052 at the age of thirty. Legend has surrounded his death with a halo. It tells that he was killed by a Moorish noble who was envious of his great fame as a poet. He buried Gabirol's body under a fig tree in his garden which immediately bloomed forth in most exquisite bloom, an event which ultimately led to the arrest of the murderer.

The literary output of Gabirol is immense for such a short life, for besides hundreds of poems, he wrote a number of philosophical works which are of exceptional value (see Ch. XI). It is almost incomprehensible to grasp how a mind so young and a body so fragile could stand the strain of such labor. But his was a master mind which rises above circumstances and conditions.

Gabirol was both a secular and a sacred poet, but he excelled in the latter capacity. It is there where he really attained the highest pinnacles of poetry. The range of his secular poetry is, however, limited in its extent by his peculiar tragic life. It embraces only the following divisions: (*a*) On himself where his own soul and bitter life is the object; (*b*) friendship poems in praise of known persons; (*c*) elegies on the death of friends; (*d*) didactic poems including a long masterful poem on the rules of grammar by the name of Anak, a necklace (see Sect. 114). There is only one love poem, and that to an imaginary beloved which is most likely his muse, one wine poem and two or more nature poems. Gabirol's personality as reflected in his poems presents a sharp dualism. In his secular poems, he is self-centered and exceedingly proud. He was conscious of his great genius and makes one of his friends say:

Know that you are unique in your generation
And thy poems are like pearly necklaces.[2]

In another place he says:

I am the master and song is a slave to me;
  The harp of all poets and minstrels am I.
My song is a crown to all kings of the earth,
  And a mitre on th' heads of the noble and high.
Though my body but treads on the earth, here below,
  My spirit yet soars to the clouds in the sky.
Sixteen though I am, yet my wisdom excels
  The wisdom of one who is eighty well-nigh.[3]

This ageing before his time, this being a man of another world, a denizen of heaven who is perforce confined to earthly existence, left the impression on his secular poems. In the poems where he himself is the subject, he is constantly complaining of his bitter fate, and as if in a way of apology why he does not taste of the joys of life which seem so sweet and attractive, he speaks of the fleeting of life, of the vanity of the world. He finds refuge in wisdom which is to him all joy and desire. These notes, though extremely pessimistic, are expressed in such beautiful style, in such exquisite rhymes and meter, that they make pleasant reading in spite of their sad note. Gabirol practically ransacked the treasures of the Hebrew language and used them lavishly for his poems. He employed all kinds of devices to make his songs more attractive. His boast that the song is his "slave" was not a vain boast; even his poem on grammar reads like a hymn. Gabirol was endowed with all the qualities of a poet, chief of which is a strong sense of beauty, and though it is not always fully expressed except in form, it was in him. In the few nature poems we have, we see not only an observing eye, but a feeling heart for the changing beauties of nature. In his description on spring, in the poem "May Winter Keep his Vow," [4] we have one of the finest gems of nature poetry where the delicate tints of the fresh plants covering the earth, the joy of the creatures in spring, and the flight of the birds in the sunlight, and its reflection in their cheerful feathers are artfully reproduced. From a gloomy soul like Gabirol's, mirth is hardly expected, but when it broke forth it rang clear and true. His wine song testifies to that. It runs as follows:

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[2] Songs of Solomon Ibn Gabirol, ed. Bialik and Ravnitzki, Vol. I, No. 41.
[3] Ibid. No. 110.

Chorus: Of wine, alas! there's not a drop,
Our host has filled our goblets to the top
With water.

When monarch wine lies prone,
By water overthrown,
How can a merry song be sung?
For naught is to wet our tongue
But water.

Chorus: Of wine, etc.

No sweetmeats can delight
My dainty appetite
For I, alas! must learn to drink,
However I may writhe and shrink,
Pure water.

Chorus: Of wine, etc.

To toads I feel allied,
To frogs by kinship tied;
For water drinking is no joke,
Ere long you all will hear me croak
Quack water.

Chorus. Of wine, etc.* [5]

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[4] Ibid. No. 44.

* Translation taken from Jewish Literature and other Essays by Gustave Karpeles.

[5] Ibid. No. 83.

He also possessed considerable wit as is evident from his epigrams, but due to the bitterness of his soul, it is as a rule biting.

In the sacred poems, we see before us a different Gabirol. His personality seems to shrink before the great infinite power of the Almighty, his pride is gone and he is at a total loss how even to approach the endless-all.

Thus he sings:

And in Thy presence to myself appear
As a little earth-worm.
O, Thou, who fillest the earth and whose greatness
Is endless,
Shall one like me laud Thee,
And how shall he honor Thee? * [6]

But this lowering of himself does not come from fear but from penetrating knowledge into the great mystery of God. Gabirol was a mystic and strove with all his heart to unite with God even to merge in Him, as he says:

My thoughts astounded asked me why
Towards the whirling wheels on high
In ecstasy I rush and fly.

The living God is my desire,
It carries me on wings of fire,
Body and soul to Him aspire.

God is at once my joy and fate,
This yearning me He did create,
At thought of Him I palpitate.

Shall song with all its loveliness
Submerge my soul with happiness
Before the God of Gods it bless? [7]

It is no wonder that he found no words to express his love and longing for God, and therefore sings:

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* All translations of pieces from sacred poems are taken from the volume in the Jewish classic series, issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America, entitled, Selected Religious Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol, ed. by Israel Davidson and translated into English Verse by Israel Zangwill.

[6] Vol. of Selections, No. 14.

[7] Ibid. No. 12.

At the dawn I seek Thee,
Rock and refuge tried,
In due service speak Thee
Morn and eventide.

Little to thy glory
Heart or tongue can do;
Small remains the story,
Add we spirit too.

Yet since man's praise ringing
May seem good to Thee,
I will praise Thee singing
While Thy breath is in me.[7a]

Strong as was Gabirol's desire, love, and longing for God, equally strong was his love for his people. He imbibed its suffering and gave it tongue and expression. He complains bitterly on behalf of his people.

Six years were decreed for a slave to wait
When his freedom he sought at his master's
hand;
But the years of my bondage lack term or date,
It is hard, O my Master, to understand.[8]

This is not a plea but a demand upon God for redemption. This demand is expressed sometimes in plaintive tones and sometimes in tones of love and longing. An invitation to God to redeem His people is expressed in such terms:

Come up to me at early dawn,
Come up to me, for I am drawn,
Beloved, by my spirit's spell,
To see the sons of Israel.

And ends:

The joy in Thee, I will evince
With which a people greets its prince.
O son of Jesse, holy stem,
God's servant, born of Bethlehem.[9]

Such love poems to God abound in large numbers. Gabirol has written profusely all kinds of sacred poetry to all festivals and holy days, devotional and penitential, national and individual. In the individual penitential poems, his pessimistic inclination takes hold of him and he chants upon the misery of human life in striking words like these:

[7a] Ibid. No. 1.
[8] Ibid. No. 9.
[9] Ibid. No. 4.

Life is a vine branch,
A vintager death;
He threatens and lowers
More near with each breath.

Gabirol, who was as Heine says of him, "The poet among philosophers and the philosopher among poets," wrote a number of philosophical poems where the lofty thoughts match the height of poetry, and the crown of these poems is "The Royal Crown," a long poem of remarkable beauty and sublime thought. In this poem Gabirol poured forth all the richness of his heart and the treasures of his mind. It is a limitless ode to God, and an all-encompassing epic of the Universe. In it, the poet, philosopher and scientist join hands, for all the knowledge of the time is interwoven there, and all that the poet gathered during his life in the fields of wisdom is laid out before the reader. The poem is logically divided into five parts with a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue is a short ode to God where all that belongs to Him is described briefly, namely, His ineffable name, His might and potence, the two worlds, the existence and all. Then follows part one where His attributes, oneness, existing, living source of light, and wisdom are each described. Part two describes the Universe, the handiwork of God; in it the seven planets, their size, orbit, time of revolution and their peculiar influence over human life are accurately depicted. He then gives a description of the other three spheres, namely, that of the constellations, the first sphere, and that of the active reason. Part three speaks of the soul, its nature, migration to the earth and influence on the body. Part four deals with the life of man, his struggles with the desires and passions, his suffering from life's vicissitudes, and the shortness of his sojourn on earth. Part five is a confession of sins and a plea for mercy, and the epilogue completes with a passionate prayer to the great God whose greatness after all can not be described. The style of the *Crown* bristles with gems of expressions culled from every nook of Hebrew literature; it is as pure as crystal and flows as lightly as a forest brook. It is not bound by meter but has rhyme and each strophe ends with a Biblical verse. This poem alone honestly earned for Gabirol the exquisite line of Heine, "Gabirol, the nightingale of piety whose Rose was God."

125. THE SUCCESSORS OF GABIROL (*Bachya, Isaac Ibn Giath, Moses Ibn Ezra*)

The great Ibn Gabirol was followed by a host of other poets and singers. They came from all ranks, from the lay professions as well as from the ranks of Talmudists and rabbis. All vied with each other in the esteemed art of poetry. We will turn to the few outstanding figures. Bachya ben Joseph, Ibn Pakuda, the judge, a man of great learning and deep piety, possessed of a keen sense of philosophy (see Sect. 165), whose exact time and place are not definitely known though it has been surmised that he was born in 1040 and died 1110, has left us a number of sacred poems which are distinguished by their depth of thought and beauty of expression. The best of them is a dialogue with his soul where he admonishes her to reflect upon the state of human life and its ultimate destiny and purpose. In it he also throws out a few reflections on life in general which possess a deep pathos though somewhat gloomy. He sings thus:

Death is life's brother,
They keep fast to one another
United by ends of a frail bridge
Over which all creatures pass.
Life is the entrance—death the exit;
Life builds—death demolishes;
Life sows—death reaps;
Life plants—death uproots;
Life joins together—death separates;
Life links together—death scatters.

A poet of note was also the Talmudic scholar Rabbi Isaac Ibn Giath (born 1030 died 1089) who wrote numerous poems, sacred as well as secular, but his distinction lies in the sacred poetry bearing a national character where he represents the relation between God and Israel as between a lover and his beloved. He sings of the beloved in exile complaining to her lover of his forsaking her and begging him to return to her bower.

Soon a great star arose upon the horizon of Hebrew poetry. He was Moses ben Jacob Ibn Ezra of Granada. He was born 1070 and died 1150. His life was embittered by an unfortunate love affair. In his youth, he fell madly in love with his niece, the daughter of his older brother, Isaac. She requited his love, but her father interfered and she was forced to marry his younger brother. This stinging disappointment turned him bitter against his brothers and he left his native town and wandered about for the rest of his life in strange countries. His wound was never healed and he attempted to assuage it by pouring out his soul in burning love songs, and in complaints against the treachery of friends and brothers. The love songs were always intended for his quondam love, who, though married, always seemed to entertain a deep affection for him. In his poetry, he rises to great heights. He was a master of Hebrew, and under his skilled pen it emitted wondrous sounds. He devoted himself to secular poetry, songs of friendship, love, nature, and life, and at times, he overcame his gloom and sang on wine and the joy of life. Here is one of his epigrams, "A pretty maiden, a cup of wine, a beautiful garden, the song of a bird, and the murmur of the brook are the cure of the lover, the joy of the lonely, the wealth of the poor, and the medicine of the sick"; or he sings of age and youth as follows:

"Tell me, gazelle, why do you hate an old man from the depth of thy heart?" "Why," she replied, "do you love a youthful maiden better than an old woman?" These, however, were only fleeting moments in the flight of his poetic spirit. On the whole, he is dominated by the spirit of gloom and he reflects upon life and its vicissitudes morosely thus, "The years of man are dreams and death is the interpreter." "Man travels to his end daily but he thinks he is resting like a man on a boat imagines rest while he floats on the wings of the wind."

His masterpiece is *The Necklace,* also known as the *Tarshish,* a collection of twelve hundred and ten verses, all arranged in a peculiar way, each couplet ending with the same word, but with a different meaning in each line. But great as he was in his secular poetry, he was still greater as a sacred poet. Moses Ibn Ezra's suffering soul found in religion a refuge and he poured forth his heart to his God in hundreds of hymns and songs of praise. He devoted himself especially to penitential poetry (Selichoth) and on account of this he was nicknamed Moshe Hasaloch (Moses the writer of Selichoth). In his penitential poems, we hear the cry of a contrite spirit calling upon his maker for forgiveness for possible aberrations which, though, might not have been consummated in action but existed in thought and desire. In them, the longing and yearning for God is expressed with deep pathos. He, of course, heard the cry of his people and felt their suffering, and here and there, he gives strong expression to the nation's plaint against God for allowing them to remain so long in captivity, but on the whole, he is the typical individual religious poet, the interpreter of his soul, yet, his religious individuality is of a universal nature, so that his poems became the medium of religious expression for every Jew. Moses also wrote a poetic paraphrase of the Book on Jonah for the Day of Atonement which was adopted in the Avignion Machsor (sacred poetry cycle). It is a fine example of Biblical epic. He also wrote a book in Arabic on the art of poetry where he discusses the various forms of poetry and gives a review of the development of Jewish poetry. All these poets were great and sweet singers in Israel, but soon there arose one whose poems represent the very acme of poetry in that period.

126. JUDAH HALEVI

Judah ben Samuel Halevi was born about 1080 in Toledo, at that time the capital of Christian Spain, and died in the Orient about the year 1140. His soul was one of the noblest and purest that ever descended on earth and is wonderfully characterized by Heinrich Heine who said of it as follows: "When God created the soul of Halevi, He was so enraptured by its beauty and exquisiteness that He could not restrain Himself and kissed it." It is this Divine kiss which reverberates in all his creations both poetic and philosophic. This soul possessed also serenity and harmony, a boon which was denied to his two great predecessors, Gabirol and Moses Ibn Ezra. His life was not marred by suffering or by disappointment but flowed peacefully and quietly, and hence his poetry reflects that nature as we will see.

In his youth, he attended the great Academy of Isaac Alfasi in Lucena where he acquired many friends. After completing his course there, he returned to Toledo where he practiced medicine with great success. He married there and had an only daughter. Later, he removed to Cordova, Mohammedan Spain, but was soon seized with great longing for Palestine, which longing became a passion, as he says,

> O, city of the world most chastely fair
> In the far West, behold, I sigh for thee,
> Oh, had I eagle's wings, I'd fly to thee,
> And with my falling tears make moist thine earth.*

At last, he decided to carry out his wish, left home, wife and daughter and his beloved grandson for the Orient. He visited Egypt. We meet him in Tyre and Damascus, but then he suddenly disappears. Jewish legend has it that he was killed by an Arab while he was kneeling at the gates of Jerusalem and singing his famous ode to Zion.

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* Translation taken from Lady Magnus: Jewish Portraits.

His poetry may at times lack the depth of Gabirol's all-penetrating spirit, but it is, as said, more harmonious and it does not break out in wrath and anger but flows bubblingly like water from an inexhaustible well. In general it may be divided into three classes, secular, religious and national. In his secular poetry, we have before us a poet with a cheerful view of life who knew life's pleasures and rejoiced in them. In short, in Halevi, we have the perfect harmony of man and Jew. He sang on friendship, love, and wine, and on the joy of life as well as on its reverses. His love songs are noble and show a keen sense for beauty, both of nature and human form. Thus he sings:

Through the veil are seen two serpent-eyes.
A snake coils o'er your cheek—your hair;
It stings the hearts of many from afar, my fair.

Or

O beautiful of sight,
And sweet of voice;
In you I sight
A beauty choice,
In which there mingle
The rising of the light
And coming of the night.
Upon your cheek and the hair of your head,
I bless Him, who darkness made,
And "Let there be light" said.[10]

Even in his old age when on his way to Palestine on passing through Egypt and being asked what he saw in the land of the Pharoahs, he replied:

Wondrous is this land to see,
With perfume its meadows laden,
But none, fairer than all to me is yon gentle maiden.
Ah, time's swift flight I fain would stay
Forgetting that my locks are grey.*

Halevi was more interested in life but he had an observing eye for the beauty of nature. His song on "The Roses of Spring" is a gem of nature poetry. Says he,

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[10] Anthology of Hebrew Poetry, ed. Brody, p. 176.

* Translation taken from J. En. Vol. VII, p. 347.

Yestreen the earth, like a suckling babe, drained the breasts of the wintry
clouds;
Or, like a bride with soul shut up, yearning for the time of love;
Yearned for the summer of its love when its weary heart is healed;
Or, like a dainty girl, blushing in her new-donned robes,
In garments all of golden flowers and broidered work of lilies,
The earth each day its robes renews and wins fresh beauty,
Changing here from lily white to rosy red, and there to emerald green,
Now turns pale, and now it blushes like a bride kissing her lover.
The beauty of the flowers was surely stolen from the starry skies.* [11]

Likewise is his description of a storm at sea:

The billows roar
As the wheels roll o'er;
They fall and soar
On the face of the sea.
The heavens grow black,
And each wave as a stack
Rises up, then rears back
Till the depths you can see.
The cauldron boils o'er
With a hiss and a roar,
And none can restore
Its tranquillity.
And mighty waves hide
As the waters divide
And a mountain with pride
Rises near a valley.* [12]

Only a short time did Halevi play with the secular muse. Soon, as he felt his years passing, his religious spirit took hold of him and he calls to his soul:

Asleep in the bosom of youth, how long wilt thou lie?
Know that boyhood is like shaken tow.
Shake thyself from the lure of time—like birds
Shake themselves from the dewdrops of the night.[13]

And verily did his soul fulfill his call—his deep thirst for God knew no bounds, with all the might of his soul, he strives towards Him. He is filled with His thoughts, rises from bed at night to praise Him and feels His nearness. He says,

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* (Translated by Joseph Jacobs in *Jewish Ideals,* etc., p. 110.)

[11] Judah Halevi, Collected Poems Hebrew, ed. Harkavy, V. 2, p. 58.

* (Taken with alterations from Joseph Jacobs' *Jewish Ideals,* pp. 129–130.)

[12] Ibid. Vol. I, p. 35.

[13] Selected Poems of Judah Halevi, Classic Series, tr. by Nina Salaman, No. 45.

O Lord, where shall I find Thee?
  All-hidden and exalted is Thy place;
And where shall I not find Thee?
  Full of Thy glory is the infinite space.

Without Him his soul would wither away, and he sums up his feelings in the words,

  Longing I sought Thy presence;
Lord, with my whole heart did I call and pray,
  And going out toward Thee,
I found Thee coming to me on the way.* [14]

But at times his heart contracts from pain of doubt. Why should the God of justice whose ways are just and merciful, the God of goodness be unjust to his people, why should the selected people cleaving to the Torah be martyred and tortured? And to this problem, he endeavors to find an answer.

The problem and the search for its soultion is the keynote of his national poetry. Halevi is the poet par excellence of the Jewish nation and most of the sacred poems are of a national character. He is the interpreter of the heart of the nation to its God. Like Gabirol, he sings at times love poems to the God of Israel and calls:

Come beloved, come Thou to me;
In the bower of the lilac woo me.
Stay the fiend that would pursue me.
Harps and chimes and cups all golden
To the joy of old embolden
'Neath the radiant glory olden.*

But at times he demands the justification of his people. He tells of her suffering for His sake, of her clinging to Him, and asks:

Thou turnest thy right hand,
And the enemy has stretched forth his right hand.
Hast Thou forsaken us, or is Thy hand short?[15]

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* Translated by Nina Salaman, Selected Poems of Yehuda Halevi, pp. 168–169.

[14] Collected Poems, ed. Harkavy, Vol. II, p. 131–2.

* Taken from J. Ency., Vol. VII, p. 348.

[15] Collected Poems, Vol. I, p. 61.

The solution to the problem is redemption. Redemption is to Halevi the central idea. It is not, like with other poets, a refuge from suffering but an aim in itself. He negates the present and lives entirely in the future, and hence his burning love to Zion. Zion is the central point in his desires and as long as he is not there, he feels that his very life is defective and incomplete. He therefore sings,

My heart is in the East,
But I am in the ends of the West.
How then can I taste what I eat,
And how can food to me be sweet? [16]

But it is not his own life alone which is defective, but the life of the nation as well. Here in Goluth, in exile, that life can never be complete. It is only in Zion that God is near to man, there Israel will find his youth and will fulfill his great mission to be the light of nations. In his serenade to Zion entitled "Zion Dost Thou Ask for the Peace of thy Exiles," all his love for his people and land, the story of their great past, miserable present, the hope and vision of a glorious future are glowingly set forth by Halevi.

And well did he characterize in that very song his own national poetry:

I am like a jackal to bewail thy woe,
But when I dream of thy restoration
I am a harp for thy songs.

A silver harp with many strings which emitted wonderful melodies was indeed the soul of Halevi.

127. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

A poet of great note was the famous commentator of the Bible, grammarian and astronomer, Abraham Ibn Ezra. This remarkable man whose intellect was all encompassing brought to his poetry besides a feeling heart also a very keen penetrating mind. He can well be compared to Browning in the tone of his poetry which raises man to an intellectual height from which he surveys the world and life. His is a lyrical genius which draws inspiration from a complete understanding of nature and man. He observes the nature of God, his power and creation, and the relation of God to the world. He also penetrates into the intricacies of the human soul, the constant struggle between flesh and spirit, and all his observations he expresses in his poems. Some of them are of a didactic nature and help man both to understand the forces of nature and the soul of man, but many of them raise man to an ethical height. Ibn Ezra, in spite of the fact that his life was spent in wandering and suffering, does not complain bitterly like Moses Ibn Ezra, nor does he rise above existence and soar in heavenly spheres like Gabirol, but expresses in his poems a quietude of soul which arises from a true understanding of the world and its happenings, and brings us to a conception of their necessity. Such a conception brings one to a restful state of the soul.

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[16] Ibid. p. 7.

Ibn Ezra's range of poetry is very wide and covers every subject under the sun. He is the master par excellence of the Hebrew language, and in his hands it was so elastic that it served all purposes. He wrote sacred poetry, poems of friendship, poems of love, wine ditties, and didactic poems on nature, astronomy, the seasons, and calendar. He has even a long poem on the chess game, where he relates in a punctilious manner in fine verse and meter all the intricate rules of the game. Another fine poem of this kind is one on hygiene and dietetics, where he gives in meter and rhyme sound advice to man how to take care of his body and the kind of diet he should choose according to each month of the year. Each month is given two strophes and in addition there is an epilogue of two strophes, twenty-six strophes in all.

Ibn Ezra possessed a delicate and quite biting sense of humor and this he turned to good account in a number of satiric poems. He did not even disdain to write puzzles and queer poems remarkable for their peculiar construction in fantastic shapes. Such is the *Tree Poem,* written in honor of Jacob Tam, the great Talmudic scholar of France. The construction of the poem is as follows: In the center there runs a line which is the trunk, saying, "Pene Rab Yakob Oru K'hama B'no Meir U-Meir Ladamah" (The face of Rabbi Jacob is like the sun, he is the son of Meir, i. e. light, and lights the world). Out of this trunk, there run branch lines to the right and left, and each word of the trunk begins a branch line to the right and to the left. Thus each word in the trunk is made to serve three purposes as a part of the trunk line and as parts of the two branch lines. He was, it seems, very proud of his great skill in mastering the language and he delighted in this kind of brilliance. We have, therefore, a number of short poems where the lines read both ways, a wonderful little poem which consists almost entirely of alliteration. It is a sacred piut to the Geulah prayer before Shemonah Esre (eighteen benedictions) and its beginning is as follows:

Four stood by the sea
Tzur, Tzir, Tzon, and Tzor.

Tzur, i. e. Creator, God; Tzir, i. e. Messenger, Moses; Tzon, i. e. Sheep, Israel; Tzor, i. e. Enemy. A play is then made upon these four words.

In his sacred poems, we see in spite of his otherwise known skepticism a deep expression of a religious soul. He longs for God and emphasizes especially the infinite distance between Him and man. Here is one where a play is made upon contrary emotions and sensations:

When I hunger to praise Thee, I'm sated;
  When to worship I thirst, I am drunk.
Then my heart is secure, when I fear Thee
  When in terror and awe I am sunk.
When I bow to Thee low, I am lifted;
  When I fall in Thy presence, I rise.
I am free when I serve, for Thy name's sake,
  My oppressors who Thy name despise.
All suffering is sweet to my heart,
  When I know that my God Thou art.[17]

or,

In Thee, my God, is my desire;
In Thee my passionate love and fire.
To Thee my reins,[18] to Thee my heart;
To Thee my soul and spirit dart.
To Thee my hands, to Thee my feet;
From Thee doth come my form complete.
My blood, my bones, they all are Thine,
My body and image divine.
To Thee belong my eyes and thought,
The form and pattern Thou hast wrought.
To Thee my soul, to Thee my might;
Thou art my trust and my delight.
To Thee, to whom there is no peer,
I give my soul, to me so dear.[19]

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[17] Anthology, ed. Brody, p. 195.

[18] The kidneys were thought to be a secondary seat of thought and emotion. Cf. the Biblical expressions: My reins instruct me (Ps. XVII, 8), or God searcheth the heart and tries the reins, Jeremiah XVII, 8.

[19] Abraham Ibn Ezra, Colected Poems, ed. Kahana, No. 133.

This is the kind of religious spirit which dominated Ibn Ezra. The poem besides this elevated religious feeling is in itself a masterful example of style, as half of its lines begin with the Lamed and the other half with Vav, and there is a mono-rhyme for its eighty-five lines. Ibn Ezra wrote also a long philosophical poem, like Gabirol's Royal Crown. It runs along the same lines and contains also an expression of his philosophy and science. Like Gabirol, he describes first, God and His attributes, then, the world depicting the planets, and constellations and dwelling at length on the sub-lunar world, i. e. the earth, describing its parts and elements. From the world, he comes down to man and gives a minute description of his anatomy, followed by that of the soul, its struggles with the desires of the body. Finally, a brief review of the vicissitudes of human life is given, its purpose, destination, and the impending judgment. The poem closes with a confession and plea for forgiveness.

In his national poems, he feels deeply the pangs of pain and suffering of his people, and at times breaks out in vehement protest against such a state and argues with God thus:

> The God of Israel Thou wast called of yore—
>   Thou wast their Father
> And they were Thy children—but are they no more?
> Then why didst Thou for thousand years forget them?
> And enemies from all around beset them.
> Dost Thou not see, or is Thy hand so weak,
> That Thou canst not save those who help do seek?
> Redeemer there is none as near as Thou;
>   Thy name from ever was Redeemer.
> So hasten, our God, redeem us now.[20]

His wandering life, where he met all vicissitudes and underwent all kinds of experiences, some pleasant and some unpleasant, afforded him ample opportunity for his biting wit, and we have a number of delightful poems, bits of remarkable satire. He once came to a place where he was not treated well. He wrote thus:

> Emptied of wine is the cask;
> To swallow the cheese is a task.
> Blind on both eyes is the dame
> Withered, crippled, and lame,
> And yet does she strut without shame.

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[20] S. D. Luzzatto, Collected Letters, p. 374.

Each person in the town
Is perfectly a clown.
In this place man and beast
Are not unlike in the least.

Or his plaint against hard fate:

I come in the morn
To the house of the nobly born.
They say he rode away.
I come again at the end of day,
But he is not at his best, and needs rest.
He is either sleeping or riding afar—
Woe to the man who was born without a star.

His complaint against the flies is a masterpiece of humor:

To whom shall I cry in my anguish?
  And where shall I flee from the flies?
No breathing-space do they allow me;
  They treat me as would enemies.
They buzz in my ears all their love-songs,
  And creep on my brow and my eyes.
I try to partake of my breakfast—
  They swarm on the coveted prize.
They drink of my wine from the goblets,
  Considering me in no wise; [21]

In addition to his poems, Ibn Ezra wrote many semi-poetic works in what we call rhymed prose. Some of these works are masterpieces and are written either in forms of letters or separate books. The best of these semi-poetic writings is the letter of Hai Ben Mekitz. It is partly modeled after Avicennas' Letter of Hai, the son of Yaktan. The letter is a description of a journey through three worlds, (1) the sublunar one, i. e. the earth; (2) the world of the seven planets where the nature of each planet is described in accordance with the astrologic notions of the time; (3) and finally, the Divine world where God and the angels dwell. The letter is an allegory. Hai Ben Makitz means the man who is living and awake, i. e. the active reason which penetrates all creation and endeavors to conceive the Creator.

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[21] Collected Poems, ed. Kahana, pp. 10, 13, 21.

128. JUDAH BEN SOLOMON AL-HARISI

With Ibn Ezra, there closes the Golden Period of Spanish poetry. The succeeding age can be called the silver one, which was in turn followed by an age of brass and copper. To this age belong a few names of note, such as that of the philosopher Joseph Ibn Tzadic (born 1081—died 1149), David Ibn Bakudah (died 1150) who wrote sacred and secular poems, as well as a number of others. But the greatest of this age is Judah ben Solomon Al-Harisi. He was born in Spain in 1165, somewhere near the city of Barcelona. His education he received in that city which was at the time a center of learning and literature, and while still a youth, he mastered both the Hebrew and Arabic languages. Being of a restless nature, he left his native land early in life and traveled in Provence, where at the time Jewish learning and literature began to flourish. The Jewish communities there were eager for knowledge and many patrons were found there who were willing to pay well for translations of Jewish books from the Arabic into the Hebrew. Harisi seemed to have been the first Hebrew writer who made literature his profession from which he made his livelihood. Thus, he was commissioned by the Jewish community at Marseilles to translate the commentary of Maimonides to the Mishnah from Arabic into Hebrew. He had executed a part of the work—the commentary to the first order, Zeraim—with great skill, and this gave him prestige and his name as translator became known. Soon he was commissioned by some one to make a new Hebrew translation of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed, of which work he only completed one part. His translation is clear, and his style light and popular, but it is hardly as accurate as that of Ibn Tibbon (see Ch. XII).

In 1205, he returned to Spain, and we find him then in Toledo where he was urged to translate the poetic satire of Hariri (1054–1121) from Arabic into Hebrew. He accomplished this difficult task, but seemed not to have found satisfaction in this work. He then started on his long journey through the Orient, visited Palestine, Babylon and stayed for a time in Egypt. On his journey, he visited the most important Jewish communities, and came in contact with all famous Jewish leaders. He was received favorably in all the places he visited and found many patrons during his travels, who paid him liberally for his verses of praise and also encouraged him in his work. It was on these journeys that he conceived and executed his Magnum Opus, the *Tachkemoni* (place or book of wisdom), a kaleidoscopic satire like Hariri's, but of purely Jewish character (see for characterization Ch. XVI, Sect. 204). This book which is divided into fifty portals or chapters is interwoven with a number of poems of diverse character, and it is on these poems that his fame as a poet rests. He returned from his travels to Spain where he died in the year 1225. In addition to the Tachkemoni and the above-mentioned translation, he made a number of other translations of several ethical books which will be discussed in the proper place (see Ch. XVI).

Harisi is primarily to be classed as a secular poet. He wrote love poems, wine songs, many songs of praise to his patrons, and a number of diverse poems of a moral didactic nature. One of his love poems runs thus:

Gazelle who hath drawn my heart like with a string and burnt
 in on the coals of her love,
Pity upon a lover whom his soul has sold and whose eye put
 him in a prison of love.
O, pity him and turn with grace to him, lest they say a
 woman killed him.[22]

He also wrote several devotional and national poems. Of his devotional poems there is one on the plaint of the soul (Tachkemoni, Ch. XIII) where the soul complains bitterly upon her exile from the heavenly dwelling place and her forced stay in the body, and expresses a longing for the return to her source. He has also several fine Zion poems where genuine feeling is expressed and an unconscious imitation of Halevi is noticeable. But he lacks the pathos and depth of the earlier poets. Harisi's style is light and delightful and his greatness lies in his skill of manipulating the language, and his fine delicate humor. His poetic versatility only testifies to his mastery of style. He wrote little poems on the industry of the ant, on the fly, probably imitating Ibn Ezra's poem on the flies, on the plaint of the rooster, where he complains bitterly of the ingratitude of man who repays him for his services with evil, on the eight virtues, where each virtue, such as humility, industry, courage, faith, wisdom, instruction, good heart, and generosity is extolled in a short masterly strophe. A very keen observation of life is seen in his little poem on the strife which goes on in life. In a short strophe of eight double lines, he gives a striking picture of the strife of creatures going on in the world, saying very pointedly, "Creatures of the world, their very life depends on death for some are the food of others. The strong pursue and devour the weak, but here comes the great equalizer and gathers them all alike, for in death both the devourer and the devoured are equalled upon the earth." Thus Harisi could be serious at certain moment in life, but most of the time, he sang and laughed, and probably in this consists his uniqueness and his greatness.

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[22] Tachkemoni, ed. Kaminka.

C. Sacred Poetry of the Italian and Franco-German Schools

129. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The sacred poetry written by Italian, French, and German authors is a direct descendant of the Palestinian liturgical poetry. It is in fact a continuation of the work of Jose ben Jose, Janai, and Kalir with variations here and there. The field of sacred poetry in these countries was a very fertile one and the productivity lasted for centuries and the mass of Piutim (sacred poetry), Selichoth (devotional and penitential prayers), and other kindred forms of poetic religious expressions is so enormous that a complete survey of it is almost impossible. Almost every scholar of note in the countries mentioned, every master of Hebrew during the three centuries from the ninth to the thirteenth, the heyday period of Paitanic activity, found it necessary to add a hymn or a prayer of his own to the constantly increasing literature of religious poetry.

Yet, with all these numerous writers hailing from different lands and living in different centuries, there is hardly any fundamental variety noticeable either in the content, or in the form of the different layers of the literature, as it was noted above (Sect. 113). The sacred poetry of the Palestinian-West-European schools is not stamped with the individuality of the authors. It is the mediator between the nation and God and it is the voice of the people which speaks through it. We see, therefore, that the same topics, namely, the greatness of God, suffering of Israel, hope of redemption, historical events of the past which formed the subjects of poetic embellishment to the poets of the Palestinian school, are also employed by the Paitanim of the West-European countries.

If there is a change in the content it is in the depth and intensity of feeling. The suffering which the Franco-German Jews have undergone in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the depth of misery, the incessant persecutions, the massacres of the Crusades have all left their indelible mark upon the character of the Jew. Of course, the religious feeling was not lessened, but on the contrary was strengthened through these persecutions. The frequent martyrdom of whole communities and numerous individuals who sanctified the name of God and accepted death willingly for His sake, only intensified the love of God and the devotion to the Torah, and this intensified feeling found expression in the sacred liturgy. But at the same time, there is a strong note of protest pervading the poems, a cry of anguish by the Kenesseth Israel (the community of Israel) to its God against all these persecutions and suffering. A mighty question rises from the lips of these singers, "Why does God allow His only one, His chosen nation, to be the prey of merciless enemies?" This cry of anguish is accompanied by a deep yearning for redemption. It is not an ideal yearning or merely a longing for Zion, it becomes a soul-stirring feeling for immediate delivery from the burden of oppression, and again a question arises, Why does God delay His salvation, why does Messiah tarry? Does not the promise of God hold good? or is the cup of bitterness not yet full?

Direct solutions to these problems were not offered by the poets but hope did not forsake them and by visions of the future and pictures of the glorious past they attempt to assuage the burning pain of the present. It is an old trodden way, the way of the masters of the Agada who bequeathed their spirit to the paitanim.

And just as the content did not change, so was there hardly any change in form. The meter which was introduced by the Spanish Jewish poets was hardly utilized by these paitanim. They still followed the way of rhymed meterless poems, alphabetically arranged. Most of them used their name acrostics. Those, who were ambitious, used various combinations of rhyme and alliteration producing fine examples of style. Their language though is hardly pure. In their struggle to express their overflowing feeling, they were short of words and borrowed them wherever they could, from the treasures of Halakah and Agada, and often even coined new ones. This maltreatment of the Hebrew language evoked severe criticism from purists like Ibn Ezra, but with all the barbarisms of their style the paitanim contributed to the richness of the language, and gave it flexity and elasticity.

130. CLASSES OF PIUTIM

As noted above, the main divisions of sacred poetry are two, *Piut* and *Selichah*. Piut includes all poetry intended for the festival days and certain Sabbaths, Selichah, all devotional prayers for days of penitence, fast days, and Day of Atonement. Besides, there are smaller classes, such as Hoshannahs, especially intended for the seventh day of Succoth, Feast of Tabernacles. They are named thus, because they begin with the words *Hoshiah No,* help, O, God. Another class are the *Kinoth,* elegies intended for the Ninth of Ab, where as a rule the destruction of Zion and the exile of the Jews are the subjects, but they treat also of persecutions of their own times.

The Piut is directly connected with the standard liturgy, and as a rule embellishes the content of the service. The Selichah, on the other hand, is a free expression of religious feeling and it is not related to the service, though on certain occasions, as on the Day of Atonement, it is included in it. The Piut is subdivided into certain groups arranged according to the groups of prayers. Most of the Piutim center around the morning service (Shacharit) and they follow along its lines. We have then (*a*) *Yotzer,* coming after the benediction of creation of light; (*b*) *Ophan*, after or before the praise of the spheres (Ophanim); (*c*) *Meora,* before the close of the light benediction; (*d*) *Ahaba,* before benediction of Ahaba Raba; (*e*) *Zulat,* following the prayer after reading of Shema; (*f*) *Geulah,* preceding the last benediction of redemption. The Piutim to the Eighteen Benedictions (Shemonah Esre) are called *Keroboth,* derived from an old root used in Midrashic literature for that purpose which means to plead (originally from Korab, to draw near, hence to conciliate) as their content is usually a plea to God to remember the deeds of the Patriarchs. As a rule, they cover only the first three benedictions and are usually wound up with a long poem before Kedusha which is called *Siluḳ,* the final hymn. Most of the festivals have no hymns for the Musaph, additional service, with the exception of the first day of Passover and the last day of Tabernacles, when special poems are recited on behalf of Palestine, namely, that God grant it a good dew (Passover) and rainfall (Tabernacles), New Year's and Day of Atonement have Piutim for every service. Many hymns were also composed for the Evening service of the festivals; these are known as Maarovoth, i. e. to the Maariv service.

The Piutim of the group mentioned deal both with the subject of the prayer, as well as with that of the particular day, as for instance, the Yotzer Piutim speak of the creation of the world or light, and together with these basic ideas is interwoven the subject of the day, if it is New Year's, Judgment, if Shebuoth (Feast of Weeks), the Torah, and so on. *Ophan* is always a doxology to God where His greatness is sung. In *Ahabah,* the love of God to Israel is dwelt upon, and in *Geulah,* redemption is the theme. Thus, for Passover, there is a special hymn of redemption which was composed for every day by various authors by the name of Brach Dodi (Flee, my beloved). The name is taken from Canticles, VIII, 14. In these Geulah poems, the purest love of a martyred people to its God and Maker is expressed, and a noble plea is entered that He redeem His chosen bride. Some of the stanzas run thus:

Flee, my beloved, till the day be breaking,
Beyond end of vision—then arise
And chase these shadows—him Thou wast forsaking,
Despised, shall be exalted, high and wise
And with his wisdom sprinkling the nations.
Bare Thine arm, Lord, when we cry
"The voice of my beloved sounded high." [23]

or

Beloved, hasten to our shrine, all-holy,
And though sin claims us almost for its own
Behold how bound in chains we cower lowly.
Thou art the sacred Saviour, Thou alone,
To Thee we give ourselves in prayer wholly
O, grant redemption from Thy holy throne.[24]

The Keroba deals with the subject of the day. If it is New Year's, the Day of Judgment is portrayed. If Passover, the Exodus; if Feast of Weeks, the Torah, or the process of bringing the first fruits, and so on. In all these, and especially in the final poem, Siluk, there is always an epic element involving certain episodes in Jewish history, such as the Exodus, which is greatly embellished by the Agada, furnishing excellent material for the poets. They borrowed the Agadic stories and wove them into the fabric of their poetry. Thus, we find a number of final pieces to the Keroba dealing either with the Exodus or with the crossing of the Red Sea. The struggle of the Maccabees together with the suffering of the martyrs, as the famous mother and the seven sons (see Ch. I, Sect. 6) formed the subject for the Hanukah poems. The story of Judith was also utilized. In this way, every historical episode of importance became the subject of poetical production. The heroes in the Purim story, the various incidents of the destruction of the Temple, Elijah, the hero of Jewish legend, all found their proper place in sacred poetry. The Purim poems centered around the first, the Kinoth for the Ninth of Ab around the second, and the Habdalah (Saturday evening service) poems around the third. The New Year's and Day of Atonement furnished material for meditative poems. There, the Day of Judgment, littleness of man, the soul and its struggles, vanity of life form the theme of the poems. Thus, the Piut embraces all forms of the life of the Jew, both the individual and the national.

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[23] Geulah to first day Passover.

[24] Geulah to the Sabbath service during Passover week.

131. THE SELICHAH

The Selichah poems, or Selichoth, which as said, are of a devotional nature and are not, as a rule, attached to a particular service, are free expressions of an overflowing religious spirit. They are, primarily, of a lyric character. In the Selichoth the most individual side of the Jew is expressed. Yet, as most of the Selichoth were composed in times of national distress, the national pain became articulate here, and it is in the Selichoth that we often hear expressed the strongest protest to God. In Jewish life, we can hardly separate the individual from the community, and the wishes and the desires of the community as a whole merge together with that of the individual.

When Selichoth were destined for special days, such as the Day of Atonement, they sometimes dealt with subjects similar to that of the Keroba Piutim. But on the whole, the subjects of the Selichoth can be divided into five types: (*a*) the Admonition type (Tochocha) which is of the meditative nature like the meditative poems, where the call is issued to the soul to consider its destiny and purpose. In this type, the shortness and vanity of life, the value of penitence, the Day of Judgment, the strife between reason and passion, between spirit and body are the themes. These subjects are dealt with in various ways and forms, and some of the Selichoth strike a deep lyrical chord. (*b*) The Akeda (Sacrifice of Isaac). This stirring story of patriarchal life forms the subject of many a Selichah. In most cases, it is only a pretext for telling the martyrdom of the hundreds of Jews who sanctified the name of God in all the massacres. They, likewise, are considered Akedas, and their merit is invoked as a plea to God to forgive the sins of His people for the sake of the martyrs. (*c*) In a similar manner, the persecutions, the massacres form the theme of many Selichoth and Kinoth. Both classes afford many soul-stirring examples of lyric poetry. (*d*) The story of the ten martyrs of old. These were the great scholars—among whom is included also Akiba—who were killed in the Hadrianic persecutions and their martyrdom is a frequently used theme in a number of variations. (*e*) The last class is of the Plea (Techinah and Bakasha) type. In this class, the relations between God and Israel are touched upon. It is not the individual who pleads but the nation. Very often, intercession is called for, the Angel of Mercy, the Torah, the Throne of God are called upon to intercede on behalf of Israel. The Selichoth of this type are of various character and nature, but the basic idea is the same.

132. SACRED POETRY IN ITALY

As Jewish history is gradually becoming more and more an open book by the patient labor of a large number of scholars, the role of Italy as the mediator between Palestine and Europe becomes evident. The Jews of Italy were the channel through which Palestinian influence flowed to the communities of the West. It is, of course, natural that the Paitanic activity, modeled after the Palestinian sacred poetry, should first have begun in Italy. The earliest Paitanim hail from Southern Italy. There, in the city of Oria, which, in the ninth century, belonged to the Byzantine Empire, was a great Jewish community where intensive literary activity was going on. This community produced a few Paitanim, and it seems that the poetic ability ran in a certain family, and father transmitted it to son. The first of this family of Paitanim is Rabbi Shefatia (died 887) who was the leader of the Jewish communities in Southern Italy, and was greatly honored by the Emperor Basilius to whom he remained loyal even during the invasion of the Saracenes. Several of the poems and the Selichoth of Rabbi Shefatia are incorporated in the Selichoth collections of the German ritual. From them, we can see that their style is pure Hebrew, and were written in mono-rhyme and with the name acrostic, but not in alphabetic order. His son Rabbi Amitai (about 900) surpassed his father in poetic ability and several of his poems express the deep longing of the Jews for Palestine, and his plaint has become the plaint of the people. Here is one of his stanzas:

Lord, I remember and am sore amazed
To see each city standing in her state,
And God's own city to the low grave razed,
Yet all time we look to Thee and wait.

Another poet of Southern Italy was one Zebadia from whom we possess a number of Selichoth, written in varying rhyme and alphabetic acrostic with great skill.

From Southern Italy, the Paitanic activity spread to Rome and Northern Italy. Towards the end of the tenth century, we hear of a great Paítan in Rome, Rabbi Solomon, the son of Judah (c. 980), who for some reason or other was named the Babylonian. He wrote many Piutim and Selichoth which have been incorporated in the various Machsorim (poem cycles). His style is rather heavy, and he follows the Kalirean method, coining words and using the alphabetic acrostic, both in straight and reverse order, namely, beginning with the Tau instead of the Aleph. In Northern Italy, in Lucca, there was at that time, a learned family, the head of which was a certain Rabbi Meshulam (c. 780). One of the descendants of the family, either Kalonymos or Jekulhiel was, according to the story, transferred by Charles the Bald * to Mayence in order to establish an Academy there. But it seems that a branch of this family remained for a time in Italy, and only later towards the end of the tenth century moved altogether to Germany. This family produced a great number of Paitanim. The first of them was Meshulam, the son of Kalonymos (c. 976), who resided at Lucca, and only in his old age moved to Mayence. Meshulam was a very prolific poet, and wrote poems to almost every festival. Especially noted is his Abodah to the Day of Atonement which the German ritual has incorporated. There, like Jose ben Jose (see Sect. 116), he reviews the events from the Creation to the establishment of the priesthood and then relates the events of the service of the Day in the Temple. Meshulam uses a varying rhyme in each strophe, and very often employs the device of ending each strophe with a Biblical verse. His style is mixed, employing many Aramaic words, borrowed from the Agada.

133. FRANCO-GERMAN PAITANIM

From Italy, the Paitanic activity was transferred to Franco-German soil, expecially to the Rhine provinces. There, where towards the end of the tenth century, a great center of Jewish learning began to develop, gathered all best minds of that Jewry and a great literary activity in all fields was undertaken. Along with the intensive study of Halakah went on a feverish activity of Piut. The number of Paitanim during the two centuries, the eleventh and twelfth, will probably reach several hundred. The fact is that in this composition of sacred poems, we really find a parallel of the double activity of the first period, namely, that of Halakah and Agada. The first expressed the legal and intellectual aspect of Judaism, the second the emotional and the inner religious feeling. Likewise, in the Mediæval period—sacred poetry took the place of Agada and expressed the inner aspect of Judaism. The same great scholars, masters of Halakah, the great commentators of the Talmud, the codifiers of the Law, in their spare moments gave vent to their inner feelings and expressed the emotions of the martyred Franco-German Jewries in their Piutim and Selichoth. They complained to God, protested against suffering and also instilled hope and comfort in the hearts of their brethren.

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* See note on p. 257.

One of the first of these scholars and Paitanim is Rabbi Gershon Ben Jehudah (960–1028), known as the light of the exile (Meor ha-Golah), the founder of the great Mayence Academy of Talmud commentators. He whose own son was killed in one of the massacres felt bitterly the pang of suffering and he constantly complains to God in stern tones. Thus he asks:

> Lord of Hosts! Where are Thy wonders,
> The mighty and awesome deeds of yore
> Of which our fathers told us?

In another place he wails:

> My throat is parched from crying—violence!
> At seeing the wicked trample the place holy.
> I cried for help—for the day of vengeance is hidden
> Wherefore my bowels tremble and my heart melts.

Or

> Long are the days and lost is the vision,
> The Holy City and strong place have grown
> To be reproached, despised;
> Sunken and hidden are the things of the prized
> And naught remained but the Torah alone.

The eleventh century was especially productive in sacred poetry. Simultaneously with Gershon, another great Paitan, Kalonymos, the son of Meshulam (c. 1000), poured forth his soul in skillful poems. One of his poems which goes under the name of another man, Rabbi Amnon, and around which the halo of legend shines,[25] describes in exalted language and with a great deal of pathos the Heavenly Court on New Year's Day. It reads thus:

> The great trumpet is sounded;
> The still small voice is heard;
> The angels are dismayed;
> Fear and trembling seize them as they proclaim,
> Behold the Day of Judgment!
> As a shepherd seeketh out his flock,
> And causeth them to pass beneath his crook,
> So dost Thou cause to pass, and number,
> Tell and visit every living soul,
> Appointing the measure of every creature's life
> And decreeing their destiny.[26]

Of this family, there arose Paitan after Paitan, the son of Kalonymos Moses (1020), his sons, Kalonymos and Jekutiel (1050), and their sons all held important places in liturgical poetry. The art of composing sacred poetry became a hereditary trait in this family and for over a century and a half, they were the mouthpieces of the Jewries of France and Germany voicing their grief and hope.

Simon, the son of Isaac (1020), the uncle of the great Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi), both the colleague and the disciple of Rabbi Gershon, was a prolific Paitan. He wrote Keroboth to many festivals and many Selichoth where he implores the Torah to intercede on behalf of Israel. In this century, there were writers of Piutih, Isaac Halevi (1050), the teacher of Rashi, Benjamin, the son of Samuel (d. 1040), or Normandy, a very prolific composer of Selichoth, Elijah Ben Mordecai, and Rashi himself. A Paitan of note was Meir Ben Isaac, the cantor of Worms (d. 1060). He wrote poems both in Hebrew and Aramaic. One of his Aramaic poems is known as Akdomoth (Prologue). It is read on the first day of the Feast of Weeks before the reading of the Law. This poem is written in a mono-rhyme of one hundred lines, a double alphabetic acrostic and a long name acrostic. The first half is a hymn to God and the Torah, the second half, a picture of redemption, and days of the Messiah. It was intended to comfort Israel in tribulation and encourage them in their suffering for the sake of God. The second half is introduced by a dialogue between Israel and the nations which reads as follows:

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[25] It is told that Rabbi Amnon of Mayence was repeatedly urged by the Archbishop to change his faith. Finally exasperated by his refusals the latter ordered Amnon's hands and feet to be amputated. The festival of New Year's was at hand, and the rabbi requested that he be carried to the synagogue. When the cantor was about to recite the Kdushah, sanctification, in the Musaph service, Rabbi Amnon rose and recited the poem U'Nitane Tokef, at the conclusion of which he expired.

[26] Part of the famous poem U'Netane Tokef, in the Musaf service of New Year's and Day of Atonement.

They came in multitudes (the nations) like the waves of the sea,
And in mock astonishment asked about His miraculous deeds.
Who is He thy resplendent lover
For whose sake thou hast thrown thyself into a den of lions?
Worthier and fairer wilt thou be, if thou yield to our command;
All thy desires wherever thou be will be gratified.

To this call of the nations, Israel gives a reply which pictures the great day of redemption in bright colors.

Over the twelfth century, there hangs the pall of the Crusades. The fearful massacres which the Jewish communities of the Rhine province had undergone, find expression in the Piutim and Selichoth of the period. It is practically one prolonged wail which a martyred nation raises to its God. At times, they sound very bitter, calling to God to avenge the innocent blood mercilessly shed, and at other times, sharp invectives are uttered even against God Himself. One poet, in his bitterness says,

O God, there is no one like you among the dumb;
Thou art silent when the enemies ask, Where is your king?
But no answer comes forth.

Another one says to God,

Why art Thou silent?
Is not speech better than silence?

Many are the Paitanim who thus poured forth their soul in fiery speech, in rhymes and acrostics. Among the leading are Isaac Ben Meir of Narbonne, France (c. 1000), Kelanymos ben Judah, who described the massacres of the First Crusade in a soul-stirring Kinah, Isaac ben Shalom (d. 1147) who wrote plaintive and protesting Piutim, Elijah ben Shmiah (d. 1150), a prolific writer of Selichoth, Ephraim of Regensburgh (1175) and Ephraim of Bonn, a witness of the massacres of the Second Crusade who bewailed the tribulation of his brethren in a number of stirring poems, one of which is written in Aramaic and begins, "Come and hear, Master of the World," where he invites God to incline His ear to the cry of the martyrs.

However, not all sacred poetry of the century is plaintive. Here and there, we catch a note of pure religious emotion, where the poet forgets the present and only exalts in his praise of God. The outstanding work of this kind is the hymn of unity (Shir ha-Yichud) written towards the end of the century by Samuel ben Kalonymos. In this hymn, God, His attributes, His relation to the world and Israel are described philosophically and poetically. It is written in a varying half-line rhyme, namely, the two halves of the line rhyme, and on the whole is a pure Hebrew style. From the point of view of the noble and exalted contents, it holds a place next to Gabirol's Royal Crown, though it falls far below it in style, richness of language and poetic flight.

Chapter X

RABBINIC LITERATURE

Commentaries, Codes and Responsa

134. NATURE OF THIS LITERATURE

We have thus far surveyed the literary efforts made by Jewish scholars and writers during the first half of the Mediæval period, which centered around the Bible and its language, namely, that of Biblical exegesis, Hebrew grammar, and lexicography, and the cultivation of Hebrew poetry. We will now turn to other literary endeavors which deal primarily with the practical side of Jewish life and the central point of which is the Talmud or to call it by its older name, Halakah.

Jewish life in the Middle Ages in its spiritual aspect divides itself, according to the great historian of Jewish literature, L. Zunz, in three main currents, practice, Divine worship, or synagogue ritual, and religious knowledge or contemplation.[1] By practice, we are to understand the daily religious and moral life of the Jew, namely, all phenomena pertaining to a life in accordance with Jewish law and ethical conception—for as we know in Judaism, Law and practical ethics are not differentiated. By ritual is understood all details relating to the synagogue service. By religious knowledge, we mean all such spiritual phenomena which brought about the saturation of the Jewish individual and public life with the Divine spirit. In literature, these currents are respectively reflected in Halakah, liturgy, both prayers and religious poetry, and theology, Biblical exegesis, philosophy, ethics and homiletics, all forms of literature which aim at inculcating the religious spirit. Of these three literary reflections, of life, that of Halakah occupies a very prominent position, inasmuch as it covered the greatest part of Jewish life. In bulk, legal, or Halakic literature probably exceeds either of the other two divisions, for no matter how important a role the Bible or other Jewish knowledge played in Jewish life, it is by the Talmud and its decisions that the Jew measured his daily routine of life. The best minds of Jewry have occupied themselves with the study, analysis of the contents and deductions of practical decisions of the Talmud for over twelve centuries, and it is no wonder then that the literary results are so voluminous and extensive.

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[1] Zur Geschichte Und Literatur, p. 159.

Halakic literature has developed along three lines, which though different in form, are yet one in nature and purpose. These are, (*1*) Talmudic exegesis and commentaries, (*2*) Codes and collections of legal decisions, (*3*) Responsa and Novellae, i. e. fancy analytical discussions and comments. The lines between these classes of literature are not fast drawn and they often overlap each other, for the early Responsa contained a great many explanations of Talmudic passages and most Responsa certainly deal with legal decisions, yet on the whole, each class bears a distinct character of its own as will be evident.

Besides the general unity noted, namely, that of contiguity of subjects, it displays also a unity of character. Halakic study was not as greatly affected by geographic division as the previously mentioned forms of literature, namely, poetry, linguistic and Biblical exegesis, were. In it, the line dividing the literary productions of the Sephardic Jewry from that of the West-European Jewries is not as deeply marked as in the former kinds of literature. The Talmud being the same for all Jewries and the purpose sought the same, the results of the study were closely similar. I said closely similar and not identical, for differences in intellectual work there are bound to be, and even Halakic work could not have escaped the effects of a different environment, mental habits and training of the different Jewries. Not entering for the present into details, we may remark in general that the Halakic literature of the Jewries under Mohammedan rule is generally distinguished by its simplicity, clearness and systematization. That of the West-European Jewries, on the other hand, is distinguished by a mental acumen and scholastic analysis but lacked the above-named qualities. It is for this reason that the Halakic activity of the former Jewries was developed more along the line of code making and responsa, giving plain decisions on legal matters, while that of the latter Jewries followed more in the line of commentaries and novellæ where mental acumen could be displayed. That there were scholars in both Jewries who engaged in all lines of Halakic literature is needless to say.

We will now turn to these various branches of the great field of Halakic literature. We will begin with Talmudic exegesis, for though, as will be seen, some early codes precede the earliest commentaries, yet, it is Talmudic exegesis which constitutes the *nervus vivendi* of the entire Talmudic study, as without a correct understanding of the meaning of the Talmud, no practical decision can be reached. And for this very reason, the early Codes contain a great deal of exegesis.

A. COMMENTARIES

135. EARLY COMMENTARIES

As the study of the Talmud as a textbook was, during the period immediately succeeding its redaction, almost principally confined to Babylonia as it took some time until written copies of the Talmud began to circulate among the Jews in other lands, there was, therefore, no need for a commentary to the Talmud. The two Academies, Sura and Pumbedita, the very workshops, in an earlier generation, of the Talmud itself, still maintained the methods of study, traditions, and customs of that generation. The students there were thoroughly acquainted with the language, idioms and modes of speech of the Talmud, as they employed them themselves, and as a result little commenting was done during that period. The main task of study consisted in remembering by heart the contents of the Talmud, to obtain correct readings, to amend the Talmud here and there, and sometimes to interpret a difficult passage. But the interpretation was mostly oral, from teacher to pupil. Thus, we see that for a period of one hundred and seventy years from the close of the Talmud in 500 to the time of Shishne Gaon, 670 (term of office 670–689), there is not a written word left from the work of the Saburaim and Gaonim. It is only after that period when the Talmud gradually spread among Jewries of other countries, who were not acquainted as thoroughly with the language and meaning of the Talmud, nor could they easily abstract from it the practical decisions, that inquiries were addressed to the Gaonim, heads of the Academies, for explanations and decisions. The said Shishne is the first Gaon from whom we possess Responsa where he gives practical decisions, and here and there offers to the inquiries explanations of passages in the Talmud. As time went on, such inquiries increased, and the number of Responsa multiplied accordingly.

We see then that the early attempts at commenting upon the Talmud were contained in the Gaonic Responsa where they were given sporadically and disjointedly, single passages according to the needs of the inquirers. Many were also the explanations offered in the various codes collected during that period (see Sect. B). But it seems that no systematic attempt was made to write down either a commentary to the whole or a part of the Talmud, which should afford some assistance to the reader or student. If such commentaries were written at an early period they were lost. The first book, which is partly of a lexicographical nature and partly a commentary, was written towards the close of the ninth century by the Gaon Zemach, the son of Paltoi of Pumbedita. This was called the *Aruch,* meaning a prepared system. It was a dictionary of Talmudic words, phrases, and expressions alphabetically arranged. But it was more than a mere dictionary as it contained explanations of many passages. It seems that the Gaon felt that the book was a necessity for the students of his day, as they already found difficulty in understanding the words and phrases of the Talmud, for they were no more conversant with the language. The Gaon was well equipped for his task, as besides the Talmud, he also knew Persian, which helped him explain the large number of Persian words found in the Talmud. The book was lost, but it was known as late as the fifteenth century for Abraham Zaccuta, the author of the Yuhasin (see second vol., Ch. XXIII), quotes a number of articles from it. The author of the later *Aruch,* Nathan of Rome (see Sect. 145) incorporated many of Zemach's explanations.

The honor of being the first to write more or less connected commentaries to parts of the Talmud, that is, a number of tractates, falls to Saadia. This all-embracive intellect saw the necessity of such work and set out to do it. These commentaries were lost, but references to them are made by many authors. Likewise, Saadia's son speaks of his father's Commentaries. Of late, fragments of Saadia's Arabic commentary to Berakoth, the first tractate of the Talmud, were recently discovered in the Cairo Genizah[2] and were published. These fragments, though containing later additions, are parts of a larger commentary. It is also certain that he wrote commentaries to four other tractates, namely, Pesahim, Sotah, Baba Metzia, Baba Bathra and to the order *Taharoth* of the Mishnah. The nature and character of the Arabic commentary as far as can be determined from the few fragments is, that it was merely confined to explanation of words and phrases with here and there a brief explanation of the meaning of certain passages. Saadia was too close to the Talmud to go into lengthy analytical explanations.

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[2] Genizah literally means storehouse. The Cairo Genizah is the exceptionally large collection of discarded books, and parts of books which were kept in rooms adjoining the Synagogue of Elijah in Cairo. The late Dr. S. Schechter explored this storehouse of Jewish writings in 1897 and, finding it of exceptional value, transported the largest part of its contents to Cambridge University. It is in this Genizah, which has since become the hunting ground of scholars, that so many discoveries were made and from which many valuable documents shedding light on Jewish history and literature were brought forth.

The next Gaonic commentators were the last two in the line of Gaonim, Sherira (920–1000) and his son Hai (969–1038). Nothing is left of the father's commentaries except a few quotations of his explanation of certain words in the works of later authors. But of Hai's, we have a complete commentary to the sixth order of the Mishnah, *Taharoth,* and a large number of fragments of commentaries to various tractates of the Talmud, such as Berakoth, Sabbath and Ketuboth. The large number of quotations of Hai's explanations of passages in the *Aruch* of R. Nathan and later commentaries, prove that Hai must have written commentaries, if not to the entire Talmud, at least to a large part of it. Hai used two different methods in his commentaries. In his commentary to the Mishnah, he, as a rule, explains principally words and expressions, either by their derivation from roots in various languages or by comparison with other passages in Mishnah or Talmud, where they are used. In his endeavor to explain the meaning of words, he draws upon Talmudic sources and also upon the Targumim. Hai, who possessed great linguistic skill and seemed to have an acquaintance also with Greek, traces very often Mishnaic expressions to their source in other languages. He also often introduces more correct readings, which remove great difficulties in the understanding of the meaning of the Mishnoth (sections). In the commentaries to Talmudic tractates, he employs more the method of explaining the content of the Talmud. But he still uses the Gaonic method which is the paraphrasing of the words of the Talmud and telling the contents of the passages in his own words and thus elucidating the meaning. When explaining an Agadic passage which contains some strange assertion, he attempts to rationalize it. He is especially careful to remove anthropomorphic conceptions of God which the figurative Agadic words convey. He is also said to have written a commentary to the first order of the Mishnah, Zeraim, but no trace is left of it.

136. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CENTERS OF LEARNING

With the death of Hai, Babylonia ceases to be a center of spiritual influence in world Jewry, and its place was gradually taken by other centers. Slowly, during the centuries, Jewish settlements developed their spiritual life. The process of spiritual development must have been a slow one, and at first, these Jewries depended upon Babylonia for guidance and instruction, but as the Babylonian Gaonate declined, they became more and more independent, and ultimately by the end of the tenth century emancipated themselves entirely from the influence of Babylonia. Thus, by the year 1000, there are revealed to us a number of centers of literary activity throughout Europe and part of Africa. We have Northern Africa, Spain, Italy, Northern France, and Germany in Europe. In each of these countries, there are in this period well-developed centers of study with men of great intellectual ability and wide erudition, which fact goes to prove that the intellectual development in these various Jewish settlements went on for centuries previous to that point.

As stated, the gradual process of that development is veiled in mystery. But on the whole, we can discern two factors which aided in this intellectual development of these Jewries, one is the well-known influence of the Babylonian Academies, and the other, the less known but none the less potent influence of Palestine scholarship. The influence of the Babylonian Gaonate extended mostly to the Mohammedan countries, and that of Palestine to the Christian countries. It is by this time certain that the Jewries of Italy, France and Germany received their Talmudic knowledge, ritual, religious regulations and decisions from Palestine, Italy serving as the medium of influence, as it alone probably had direct connection with Palestine. It may also be surmised that the contact with Palestine by the Jews, in European Christian countries, was closer than the contact of the Jews of the Mohammedan countries with their center of influence, Babylon. From a number of evidences, we may deduce that there were constant pilgrimages by Jews from Italy to Jerusalem, and most likely, there were a large number of travelers from Palestine to European countries. For the frequent visits of Palestinian scholars to Northern France, we have the testimony of Rashi. There was thus the personal touch between Palestine and the European diaspora. The Jews of the Mohammedan countries, on the other hand, communicated with Babylon only by correspondence, by interchange of inquiries and responsa. At least it is true as far as Northern Africa and Spain are concerned. Other Eastern countries such as Syria and Egypt most likely also sent students to the Babylonian Academies.

It thus came about that Italy became in the eighth and the ninth centuries a great center of learning, especially of Talmudic study, which sent out great men to other countries. There is a tradition that Charlemagne, or Charles the Bald, desiring to improve the education of the Jews transported in the year 787 or 876 a family of scholars, headed by Rabbi Kolonymos from Lucca, Italy, to Mayence in Germany where they established an Academy.* It is true that there is another tradition that the same Charlemagne ten years later, 797, made a request through an embassy to the Caliph, Harun-Al-Rashid that the latter send him a Jewish scholar from Babylon who should propagate knowledge among his Jewish subjects. The Caliph sent him one by the name of Rabbi Machir who settled in Narbonne, Southern France, and opened an Academy there. But the influence of the latter was much smaller than that of the former. Another tradition relates of an event which took place about two centuries later and which places Italy again in the role of a disseminator of knowledge to Jewries of the world, and which was the immediate cause of the total emancipation of Spain, North Africa, and maybe even Egypt from the sphere of influence of Babylonia. The story runs as follows. In the year 960, four great men, namely, Rabbi Hushiel, Rabbi Shemaria, Rabbi Moses, and one unknown set out from Bari, Southern Italy, to another place in order to collect money for a charitable purpose. On the way, their vessel was captured by Ibn Rumahis, the Admiral of the Caliph of Cordova, Abdul-Rahman. He sold Rabbi Moses and his son Chanoch to Cordova, Rabbi Hushiel to Kairwan, North Africa, and Rabbi Shemaria to Alexandria, Egypt. These men established Academies at the respective places, and thus severed the last spiritual bonds between these Jewries and Babylon. That these scholars were Italians and not emissaries from the Academy at Sura, as former historians assumed,[3] is proven from the fact that immediately upon their arrival the Palestinian Talmud became known in these new centers of learning, while in Babylon it was almost unknown. In Italy, however, which derived its influence from Palestine, it was studied for centuries. Thus, Palestine, even in its declining days, scored indirectly a victory over its ancient rival, Babylonia.

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* There is a difference of opinion among scholars whether the tradition refers to Charlemagne or Charles the Bald. I am personally inclined in favor of the opinion that it was Charles the Bald who did the transporting. But as the other opinion has the support of the famous historian Graetz I mentioned them both in the text.

[3] Earlier historians, including Graetz, basing themselves on an erroneous interpretation of a few words in the narrative of the four captives in the history of Abraham Ibn Daud (Sepher ha-Kabbala, i. e. tradition), have propounded a different theory of the origin of these four scholars. They asserted that they all hailed from Babylon and were sent by the Academy of Sura as emissaries to the Jews of Europe to raise money for the support of the school. But the source mentioned above, which is the only source for the story, does not bear out the theory, while the place of debarkation of the scholars, their destination, and the method of their teaching all speak for Italy as their native place.

These scholars brought with them not only the Palestinian Talmud, but a great store of knowledge of the Babylonian Talmud which was studied for centuries in both Palestine and Italy, and later also in France and Germany. This knowledge seemed to have been of a deep and intense nature, and consisted in penetrating the very meaning of the Talmud. In other words, they prepared the way for real commentaries on this great work.

137. THE KAIRWAN (North Africa) COMMENTATORS

The intellectual center of North African Jews was the city of Kairwan. Even before the advent of Hushiel, there were Jewish scholars there who devoted considerable time to the study of the Talmud. The Responsa of the Gaonim during the tenth century and even earlier contain many inquiries from Kairwan scholars. The famous letter of Sherira Gaon, containing the history of Talmudic tradition, was written as a responsum to a Kairwan scholar by the name of Jacob. The arrival of Hushiel gave great impetus to study, and soon his labors bore fruit. Hushiel himself left no literary work, but his work was undoubtedly incorporated in that of his son, Hanannel.

Rabbi Hanannel (period of activity 1015–1055) who was surnamed by later generations, Gaon, is a prominent commentator of the Talmud. It is possible that he has written a commentary to the entire Talmud, but we have with us only the complete commentary of three orders of the Talmud, Moed, Nashim, and Nezikin, with the exception of the Tractate Baba Bathra in the last order, of which only fragments exist. Quotations from his commentary to other tractates are given by many later authors.

The method of Hanannel in explaining the Talmud shows quite some improvement upon those of the Gaonic predecessors. He still summarizes the contents of Talmudic passages, but wherever the meaning is difficult, he is more elaborate in his explanation. Especially noteworthy is his use of the Palestinian Talmud for purposes of elucidating difficult subjects. He often compares what was said on a certain subject in the Babylonian with the discussion of the same subject in the Palestinian Talmud, and the comparison helps towards the understanding of the contents of the passage. He makes, in general, extensive use of comparison and seldom neglects to quote what was said about a certain Halakah in other places of the Talmud. Like Hai Gaon, whose explanations he quotes frequently, Hanannel endeavors to rationalize exotic Agadic statements. Other features of his commentary are: his interest in history and the endeavor to abstract the practical decision from the flowing discussion of the Talmud. The commentary is strewn with historical notes, and Hanannel invariably quotes the Pesak, i. e. decision at the end of each discussion. Yet with all its qualities, it is not an all-sufficing commentary. It seems that it was not intended to be such, at least not for beginners. It was meant as an aid to scholars who already possessed considerable knowledge of the Talmud, and one of its chief purposes was the decision of the practical Halakah, i. e. rule of actual conduct. However, with all its shortcomings, Hanannel's work proved to be of great help to Talmud students of his generation. His explanations were extensively quoted by succeeding commentators. He deserves also great credit for his endeavor to obtain the correct readings. In that, he followed to a great extent the traditions of his father who most likely brought with him correct copies of the Talmud from Italy.

The second Talmud commentator of Kairwan was Rabbi Nisim ben Jacob (period of activity 1015–1055), a colleague of Hanannel, and like him a disciple of Hushiel. He was likewise given the title Gaon by later writers. It is possible that he wrote commentaries to a large number of tractates as there are a few quotations of his comments to other tractates, such as we find a lengthy comment of his in a fragment of a later commentary to tractate Hulin in the order of Kadashim. But we possess only his commentary to the three tractates, Berakoth, Sabbath, and Erubin. He named this commentary Sepher Hamaphteah, i. e. the Key, and the name is indicative of his method. He primarily elucidates the meaning by comparison with passages from the Palestinian Talmud and other sources, such as the Tannaitic Midrashim, Siphra, Siphre, the Tosefta (see Ch. III). He does this to a greater extent than Hanannel, and shows special inclination towards the Palestinian Talmud, often even accepting its opinions against the Babylonian, which shows a departure from the way of his predecessors. Rabbi Nisim mastered Arabic and used that language to a considerable extent in his commentary.

138. SPANISH COMMENTATORS

The scholastic bloom of North Africa was of short duration. With the passing of Hanannel and Nisim, the period of its greatness is closed. Most of the scholars left Northern Africa, and immigrated into neighboring Spain, as was the case with the great Isaac Al Fasi about whom we will hear later. It is to Spain that we must now turn for the fruits of extensive and intensive Talmudic study.

Moses, one of the four captives, established in Cordova a Talmudic Academy which was continued under the presidency of his son, Chanoch, and soon other Academies were opened in other cities. The eleventh and twelfth centuries which practically mark the Golden Period of Spain in other branches of Jewish Literature as we have seen, were also productive in the field of Talmudic study. Many of the great men whose names were mentioned previously as Bible exegetes, grammarians and poets were also great Talmudic scholars, and besides, there were others who specialized in that field alone.

The Talmudic literary activity went on in many directions, codifying, writing Responsa and commenting on the Talmud, but it seems that the greatest amount of energy was devoted to the first two branches, and only a smaller share was given to the last one. Of Rabbi Moses very little was left, only a few Responsa. Of Rabbi Chanoch, a later source asserts that he wrote an Arabic commentary to the Talmud, but no trace is left of it, to prove the assertion. Some Responsa, however, bearing his name are extant. A great Talmudic scholar was the disciple of Rabbi Moses and competitor of Chanoch, Rabbi Joseph Ibn Abittur (see Ch. IX). Of him, it is also said that he commentated the entire Talmud in Arabic, but the historical source [4] where the assertion is made does not make it clear whether a commentary or a translation is meant. As the chronicler tells us distinctly that the work was done for the Sultan, we may safely surmise that it was a translation, either of the Mishnah or a part of the Talmud. Ben Abitur is thus the first translator of the Talmud in another tongue, and also indirectly a commentator, for every translation is also a commentary. Unfortunately, nothing is extant of this translation or commentary.

The following generation produced a great number of scholars. Rabbi Samuel Halevi called the Nagid, i. e. the Prince, statesman, grammarian and poet, was also a great Talmudic scholar, and although he did not write any systematic commentary to any of the tractates of the Talmud, explained many difficult passages in his collection of Halakic decisions which are quoted by later writers.

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[4] Sepher ha-Kabbala, i. e. The Book of Tradition, by Abraham Ibn Daud.

Of the five great scholars of this generation who all bore the name of Isaac, who flourished in Spain in the eleventh century, each contributed his share towards the explaining of the Talmud. Isaac Ibn Giat (see above Ch. IX), poet and codifier (see Sect. B), is said by Abraham, the son of Moses ben Maimon, to have written a commentary on the Talmud, but nothing is extant of that commentary except a few quotations quoted by Maimonides in his commentary to the Mishnah. Isaac, the son of Baruch Ibn Albalia (1035–1094), astronomer and scientist but also a great Talmudist, wrote a commentary under the name of *Kupath ha-Roḳlim,* i. e. the treasure box of the collector, wherein he comments upon especially difficult discussions of the Talmud.[5] The book came down to us in an incomplete state. But even the part we possess, shows the departure of the author in his method of commenting from those who preceded him. It is a real commentary and not merely a collection of notes on difficult words or passages. It displays a penetrating insight into the Talmudic discussion and a tendency to analyze completely the intricate subject-matter. Ibn Albalia's method resembles more the Franco-German way of Talmudic study than that of the Spanish scholars, and this is due to the fact that one of his teachers was a French scholar by the name of Perigora, who immigrated into Cordova. His colleague and contemporary, Isaac ben Reuben, the Barcelonian, is also credited with the writing of a commentary to the tractate Ketuboth, and possibly to Erubin.

The greatest of these five scholars by the name of Isaac, was Isaac ben Jacob Al-Fasi. He was born 1013 in a town near Fez, North Africa, and spent the greatest part of his life in that country. Al-Fasi specialized only in Talmudic study and attained great eminence in that field. He mastered the Arabic tongue, and wrote a part of his work in that language. In the year 1088, at the age of seventy-five, he was forced to flee his native country and settled in Alisana, Spain, where he opened an

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[5] As to the peculiar name of the books, it is to be noted that Mediæval authors in all branches of Literature very often use euphimistic titles for their works which are at times based on some allusions to Talmudic dicta. The book in question literally means the basket of the peddler, and is derived from the use of the name as a title applied by an Amaraic scholar, in tractate Gittin 67a, to a Tanna Johann ben Nuri. He describes him as a Kupath Harochlim, i. e. a basket of the peddler which contains all kinds of merchandise as he possesses different kinds of knowledge. In a similar sense did Albalia use the title of his book meaning that it contains knowledge on different subjects. My rendering of it in the text is a rather free one.

Academy which was visited by great numbers of students, among them also the poet, Jehuda Halevi. He died in 1103. His great work is the compendium of the Talmud which often bears his name Al-Fasi. This work, though primarily a code as will be evident (see below Sect. B), contains many a commentary to difficult passages in the Talmud. Many explanations to certain sections of the Talmud are also found in his Responsa and other treatises. Thus Al-Fasi contributed greatly towards the exegesis of the Talmud, even though he did not write a systematic commentary.

His greatest disciple, who made a tremendous impression by his great knowledge of his contemporaries, was Joseph Halevi Ibn Migash (1077–1141). As a youth of twelve, he entered the Yeshibah of Al-Fasi, and for fourteen years, he sat at the feet of the great master whom he succeeded in 1103. His master wrote of him that his knowledge was not exceeded by any great scholar of the generation and that even in the time of Moses there was no one like him. Maimonides later writes of him that his erudition was astounding. He wrote commentaries to many tractates of the Talmud, but only two are extant, to Baba Bathra and Shebuoth. From these we can see that his method differs but little from that of Rabbi Hanannel, namely, that he does not explain the meaning of each paragraph and sentence but paraphrases the contents of the Talmud and thus elucidates the general meaning.

139. MAIMONIDES AS A COMMENTATOR

The greatest commentator that the Spanish school produced was Moses ben Maimon (Biography, Sect. B). He himself tells us that he wrote a commentary to three orders of the Talmud, Moed, Nashim Nesikin, and also to Hulin,[6] but these were either not completed or lost, only one commentary to the tractate Rosh Hashonah is extant, and even it is doubtful whether even that is genuine. On the other hand, we have a complete commentary of his to all the six orders of the Mishnah, and on this work rests his fame as a commentator. He began this work at the age of twenty-three in Spain and completed it ten years later in Egypt working on it through all his wanderings.

In this commentary, as in all his other works, there is seen the systematizing skill of Maimonides, his correct reasoning and logical ability to classify things and subsume subordinate subjects under their general heads. He prefixed the commentary with a general introduction where he treats in a scientific manner the principles of oral law, classifies the Halakoth contained in the Mishnah and explains their division. He then endeavors to find logical reasons for the order of the Mishnah, why the various tractates follow each other in the adopted succession. Finally, he gives a historical survey of the order of tradition, how it was transmitted from generation to generation, enumerates the successive orders of the Tannaim up to Judah Hanasi. Maimonides perhaps lacked a critical historical sense, but he knew well how to systematize all the knowledge he possessed, and because of that his introduction to the Mishnah is a valuable contribution towards its understanding.

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[6] Introduction to the commentary on the Mishnah.

There was a fourfold purpose to his commentary: (*1*) To explain to the reader the meaning of each Mishnah, i. e. section, without having recourse to the lengthy discussion of the Talmud. (*2*) To give the Halakic decision in each Mishnah. (*3*) To act as an introduction to the science of the Talmud so that the reader will be prepared by the commentary to understand the Talmud proper. (*4*) To serve as a sort of brief compendium of the discussed subjects in both the Mishnah and the Gemarah. He executed all these tasks with remarkable skill. With great agility, he selected from the mass of discussion of the Gemarah the very plausible explanations of the Mishnah and incorporated them briefly in his commentary, adding of course many others both of his predecessors and of his own. At times, he even explains the Mishnah according to its natural meaning, that is, the sense the words convey, without taking into consideration the explanation of the Gemarah. As a rule, he has done so where the explanation will not change the accepted decision of the Halakah, but there are exceptions to this rule. He also explained the words and expressions grammatically showing their derivation from Hebrew and Aramaic roots. Needless to say that in explaining such subjects where a knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, physics, and medicine is required he drew upon his great fund of knowledge in those sciences, and that in such cases he is the clearest of all commentators.

He renders the decision of the Halakah, namely, whose opinion is accepted, at the end of each Mishnah, wherever such is necessary. Wherever the Mishnah contains a Setam, i. e. an anonymous opinion, which as we know is by itself an indication of decision, he is silent. He prefixes as a rule, an introduction to every tractate, giving the underlying principles of the subjects discussed, classifies and analyzes them. His introduction to the order of *Taharoth* is especially extensive and lucid. There he systematizes all that has been said in Talmadic literature, in the Mishnah, the Gemarah and other books, on the subject, namely, of the classes, rules and regulations, of purity and impurity (Taharah and Tumah). It is a veritable aid to the student of these subjects throughout the Talmud. Maimonides does not neglect the Agada. Wherever he comes to an Agadic Mishnah, or in his commentary to Aboth, he displays his great philosophic skill in drawing out the morals of the statements and systematizing the rules of conduct. His fourth purpose is obtained by the brevity of his style and conciseness and clearness of statements. Maimonides drew in his commentary upon the comments of his predecessors, both Gaonic and non-Gaonic, and often mentions them by name. In his introduction, he mentions that he incorporated much of the explanations of his father, which he, in turn received from Joseph Ibn Migash whose disciple he was.

As the commentary was written for the ordinary student and reader, it was written in Arabic, and only later, successive parts of it were tranlated by various translators, one of them being the poet, Judah Al Harizi, who translated at the request of the scholars of Marseilles the introduction and the commentary to the order of Zeraim.

140. THE ITALIAN AND FRANCO-GERMAN SCHOOLS OF COMMENTATORS (Early Efforts)

As we have seen, an intensive Talmudic study was going on among the West-European Jewries, and generation after generation of scholars have sunk their energy in the exploring of the mazes of that literary labryinth. It is no wonder then that the art of explaining and commenting upon the Talmud reached its highest degree of perfection in these countries, especially in the Franco-German center. We will, therefore, turn our attention to it first, though in point of time, Italy might take precedence.

The early efforts, however, must be more surmised at, as very few written records were left. The first commentaries as in Babylonia were mostly oral, the teachers explained the Talmud to their pupils in the Academies, and these transmitted them in turn to their own pupils. Some time had to elapse before these oral commentaries were put into writing, and in time, even the names of the teachers were forgotten.

The first great Talmudic scholar whose comments and decisions are mentioned by the later scholars was Judah ben Meir Hacohen, who is more generally known by the name of Leontin (fl. 950–1000). He was the teacher of Rabbi Gershon, and the latter speaks of him with the greatest reverence. He left no written work as said, but many of his explanations and probably the very method of interpretation were taken over by his great disciple, Gershon. Of this period, we have one single attempt in the field of Talmudic commentaries, and even that is more in the field of lexicography than actual commentary. This is the *Aleph-Beth* of Rabbi Machir, the brother of Rabbi Gershon. The book itself is lost, but excerpts are quoted by Rashi and others. From this we can see that it was a dictionary where subjects were alphabetically arranged, hence its name. It explained words and expressions in the way of the *Aruch* of Tzemah Gaon, and was thus intended as a manual for students.

141. GERSHON BEN JEHUDAH AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

The founder of the great school of the Franco-German commentators and Talmud scholars was Gershon ben Judah (960–1028), surnamed the Light of the Exile (Moer ha-Golah). He was born in France, but later emigrated and settled in Mayence. There he opened an Academy which was frequented by hundreds of students, and thus the study of Torah spread to all parts. The influence of Gershon on his generation was exceedingly great as evidenced by his surname. His decrees (Takanoth) in matters religious and social were accepted by all European Jewries as irrevocable and perpetual. Of these, the most famous is the prohibition of bigamy among Jews. His institutions were usually strengthened by a bann (herem), namely, that the one who transgresses them shall be under penalty of bann and excommunication. They all, therefore, are known at times as the bann of Rabbi Gershon (Herem D'Rabenu Gershon).

And great as was his personality, so great was his literary activity. He occupied himself with all fields of Jewish knowledge cultivated in his time, and that is Bible and Talmud, and decision of laws. As stated above (see Sect. 108), he copied Masoretic lists and endeavored to obtain Bibles that contained correct readings. This same service, and in a still greater measure, he has done for the Talmud. He spent a lifetime in clarifying and establishing the right readings in the Talmud, spared no efforts in obtaining the most authentic copies of the Talmud from all parts of the world until he succeeded in producing a correct text of the Talmud.

He was not alone in this work in that generation. We know of another great scholar in France, Rabbi Joseph Tob Elem (Bonfils) in Limoge, who specialized in preparing Halakic texts. This work was preparatory for the great work of teaching, expounding, and commenting upon the Talmud. Rabbi Gershon taught at the Academy for many years, and the result of his teaching was a commentary to the entire Talmud. Parts of it, though, were lost, and we have only the part covering nine tractates. This is published in editions of the Talmud under the name of Commentary of Rabbi Gershon.

However, this commentary which bears the name of Gershon is really not an individual production, but a work of two generations of scholars. It emanated from his school, and his method, explanations, and comments predominate there, but it is in reality a product of the work of students who frequented Academies, and in turn became teachers, and passed on their knowledge to their students, and the successive efforts were all incorporated in that commentary. Its proper name should be the Mayence Commentary. Its history deserves to be briefly told.

When study of the Talmud became intense in the Academies of France and Germany, the student, whose whole soul was enwrapped in this fascinating study, began to take notes of the explanations offered by the teacher. These notes were circulated in little booklets which were called "cuntres," in plural "cuntresim," a mispronunciation of the Latin word *commentarius,* a notebook and also commentary. These cuntresim were, of course, individual ones, each student having his own. But as most of them copied what they heard from the teacher or teachers, they bore a similar character, but also possessed a good deal of variation. Students very often added comments which they heard from others, or even wrote down their own remarks. Sometimes, they copied from the notes of their friends and thus added another layer to their cuntresim. In this way, each Academy had its own general adopted "cuntres," or at the close of Rabbi Gershon's activity, there was most likely a note-commentary to the whole Talmud in the Academy of Mayence which went by the name of "Mayence Cuntres." This "Cuntres" continued to grow during the time of the successors of Gershon, Elezer the Great (fl. 1050), Isaac ben Judah (fl. 1060) at Mayence, and Jacob ben Yakor and Isaac Halevi at Worms. These men were all disciples of Rabbi Gershon and continued to expound the Talmud in his way and manner. They had undoubtedly written their own "cuntresim" which were incorporated in the one of the Academy. As there were several Academies, there were undoubtedly several "cuntresim," but the one of Mayence was the principal one. It became more or less the standardized one. After going through many vicissitudes, it was completed by Eliakim ben Meshullam, who presided at the Academy of Speyer at the beginning of the twelfth century. It is this "cuntres of Mayence" which bears now the name of the commentary of Rabbi Gershon, but is really a work of generations. However, inasmuch as Rabbi Gershon was the fount and source from which all this commentating work emanated, his stamp is impressed upon it and his spirit permeates it. The name it bears is therefore not unfitting.

142. CHARACTERISTICS OF FRANCO-GERMAN METHOD OF TALMUD INTERPRETATION

The French method of commenting upon the Talmud not only strikes a new note in that branch of study, but differs radically from the Spanish method. The latter was distinguished by its systematization and by its tendency to arrive at a practical decision of the Halakah. That method which reached its perfection in the commentary of the Mishnah by Maimonides aimed, as we have seen, at fixing general concepts, and subsume the particulars under these concepts, and thus they arrived at the meaning of the Mishnah or Talmudic passage. Rabbi Hanannel, another great representative of the school, recounts briefly the content of the passage, thus bringing closer to the readers the Talmudic discussion, summarizing it for them. The former method, i. e. Franco-German, did not systematize but clung to the text, and busied itself with the particulars, with the explanation of words, expressions, and individual parts of the section. It ran close to becoming a commentary in the narrower sense of the word in its natural form.

The Spanish scholars intended their commentaries for people who study Talmud occasionally and want to get its general drift without actually penetrating into its mazes. They were written or composed individually. The Franco-German commentaries were intended for students to whom the study of the Torah was part of life. They grew out of actual teaching in the Academy where the pupils sat at the feet of the masters and listened to their expounding every part of the passage. It was intended as a guide to the student, to encourage him in original study, to call forth in his mind by his own efforts the concept of the entire section or subject discussed. It, thus, acts as an incentive for further penetration into the depths of the Talmud. Moreover, the

Franco-German method aims at bringing the student into the world of the Talmud to identify him with its spirit, to acquaint him with all its intricacies, and then let him become a denizen in its strange world. It has done so by leading him step by step, by giving him details, but not the entire content, leaving the student to find that out for himself. And the students at these Academies to whom the Talmud was the very part and parcel of their lives, did really dive into the great sea and explored all its mysteries, and in turn became guides to future generations. It was thus that the most perfect of the Franco-German commentaries became an inseparable part of the Talmud.

143. SOLOMON BEN ISAAC (*Yitzchaki, Rashi*)

Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes (for life see Sect. 109) was, as we have seen above (109), destined by Providence itself to be the great commentator of the ages. But while as a commentator of the Bible, his work, in spite of its greatness, lacks perfection, and is here and there surpassed by others, as a Talmud commentator, he stands supreme and is unexcelled. The world of the Talmud was his world, and he felt perfectly at home there, and that is the reason that he succeeded in interpreting it to others. Rashi did not aspire to be considered a great authority in rendering Halakic decisions. If he gave them, it was only under compulsion, and thus he concentrated his whole soul in his commentary. He began his work as a student. Coming to Worms to study under Jacob ben Yakar, the disciple of Rabbi Gershon, he began to prepare his own "cuntres." There, he not only noted down what he heard from his teacher, but also copied from many other sources. He continued this work at Mayence, whither he went after he left Worms, to study under Isaac ben Judah and there he completed his first draft of his commentary. Although in this draft, there is extensive copying from the current "cuntresim" of the day, and especially from the one of Mayence, yet the originality of Rashi is already evident there in his choice of material and brevity and lucidity of style.

On completing his first draft, the inexhaustible toiler set forth to revise his entire work, and the revision began in Mayence and was completed at home in Troyes. There he added all new explanations that occurred to him and also introduced the corrected reading which he found in improved manuscripts, filled out the gaps, extended the short remarks into lengthy ones, and brought the whole work up to the standard of a commentary.

When Rashi became a teacher himself and for many years expounded the Talmud to hundreds of students, it was then that the third and final edition was undertaken and almost brought to completion. This edition grew gradually from the daily study in the Academy and was brought forth through the needs of the students. Every passage was scrutinized, every expression tested and weighed, doubtful readings examined and betters ones substituted, the style improved, and thus it came forth an ideal commentary.

It is this third edition of the commentary which was largely left to the succeeding generations and appended to the Talmud editions. Rashi's commentary extends to the whole Talmud with the exception of a large part of the tractate *Baba Bathra* and of a small part of *Makoth*. To most of the tractates it is the third edition which is extant but to several tractates we have only the first draft, such as Rashi's commentaries to *Taanith* and *Moed Katan,* and the commentary to the tenth chapter of *Pesahim*. Two tractates contain Rashi's commentaries in the edition of his disciples, and lack the perfection of the hand of the master, such are those to *Nedarim* and *Nazir*. With these exceptions, and it is almost certain that these leaks were due only to the negligence of the copyists, for quotations prove that the improved editions of Rashi's commentaries extended also to these tractates, Rashi's work embraced the entire Talmud.

The unique character of Rashi's commentary to the Talmud is due not only to the fact that he carried the French method of commentation to its highest degree, but primarily to his own personality and originality. Of course, he borrowed material extensively from his predecessors, but even the borrowed material is stamped with his genius. A great commentator must possess, first of all, as we noted, spiritual affinity with the subject and the author, second, great knowledge, and third, pedagogic ability.

Rashi possessed all these and more, and that is an intuitive sense for divining the true meaning of the subject or passage. As for his Talmudic affinity, he possessed it in a remarkable degree, and it was this that made him divine the sense of a complicated subject at a glance. And equally wonderful was his knowledge, it embraced the entire Talmudic literature, all that was written in that line, both Talmuds, the Tanaaitic Midrashim, Gaonic commentaries, and all other books. All that could have been gotten in his time out of books, bearing directly and indirectly on the Talmud was all stored up in his mind, and when a passage came up for consideration, all repetitions of that passage in other places in the Talmud or elsewhere, the changes occurring there in reading or expression, various explanations offered, were unrolled before his mental eye and difficulties vanished by themselves. He drew extensively upon his knowledge in all fields. Greater than all was his pedagogic ability which gave him his method. In his method, there is a harmonious blending of induction and deduction. He explains every word, every expression, slowly by degrees, and thus busies himself with the particular, but at the same time, he explains also the meaning of the entire passage which is interwoven in the explanation of the parts. He varies his method according to the needs, at times he explains the entire expression first, and then each word, and at times the reverse. Rashi utilized all pedagogic means, he employed considerably the device of apperception, explaining the unknown by the known, very often using similies, comparisons, and other devices. He carefully selects the key expression or concept in a complicated subject, and as soon as this key is found and made known, the other dependent thoughts are clarified by themselves. When certain thoughts or ideas cannot be rendered understandable without lengthy analyses and explanations, he exchanges them by other representations which are only hints or symbols but contain briefly the entire order of thoughts. These symbols are further clarified. He was very careful to guide the student in his studies. The Talmud contains no punctuation system, no question marks, and wherever a doubtful remark occurs, he points out whether it should be read as a question or not. When the discussion is very complicated and the repartee between the scholars confusing, one asks and the other answers, Rashi informs the reader as to who asks and who answers. He thus supplied to the inexperienced student the thread which guides him in the mazes of the labyrinth of the Talmud. In explaining the meaning of a passage Rashi was very concise and limited himself to the subject in hand, and did not encumber the reader with unnecessary repetition of what has gone before or information on what is to follow. Only when a knowledge of what follows is required for the understanding of the passage, he gives a very succinct account of it.

Whenever necessary, Rashi explained the rules of Talmudic hermeneutics, i. e. the regulations by which laws were deduced as well as that of the discussion. He also supplied historical data in a sufficient measure necessary for the understanding of the subjects discussed. He also endeavored to describe the customs of the times, determined the location of geographic places with as much accuracy as he could, in the state of knowledge at the time. In short, he did not neglect any point in the Talmud which required explanation.

His great and deep knowledge of the Bible and his linguistic sense helped him to explain the verses quoted in the Talmud and their interpretation. It stood him especially in good stead when he came to explain the Agadic passages. In the explanation of the Agada, he was also greatly helped by his knowledge of the Midrashim, and if a certain passage seemed difficult in the Talmud, he explained it by a parallel in one of the many Midrashim.

A few words should also be said about his wonderful style. Rashi had not only brevity and conciseness, but the happy quality of proportion. In spite of his unlimited knowledge, he was careful not to burden the student with details, nor on the other hand, was he sparing of words when it was required. He always managed to crystallize his thoughts and centralize his ideas into few central and important concepts which included them all. In this, he is a veritable master. No wonder then, that with all the qualities the commentary possessed, it became *The Commentary* of the Talmud.

The greatest part of the commentary or the "cuntres" of Rashi was left by him in almost a completed state, as was stated, namely, in the third edition. His disciples, however, prepared a kind of fourth edition. They copied his manuscripts carefully, and with great love, correcting technical errors, obtaining the best copies and comparing notes. To such tractates where the commentary was only left in the stage of the first and second drafts with a multitude of notes at the bottom, they reworked and included the notes in the text. Thus, after a few years, the "cuntres" or commentary of Rashi received its final stamp of completion and has thus gone down into the ages.

144. COMMENTATORS OF THE SCHOOL OF RASHI

With the death of Rashi and the completion of his commentary, the Talmud was considered no more a closed book, and the need for its explanation greatly diminished. The intellectual energy of the great scholars was, therefore turned in a different direction. But still, here and there, were found some disciples who continued the work of the master, and their chief interest lay in completing the few gaps that were left open by the teacher. Thus, we see Judah ben Nathan (end of the eleventh and beginning of twelfth centuries), the son-in-law of Rashi, complete the commentary to the tractate Makot which was left unfinished by Rashi for about five folios. He also wrote or edited the commentary to tractate Nazir which bears the name of Rashi. But he showed little originality in his work as he was more of a compiler than a real commentator.

Of more originality as a commentator was another disciple of Rashi, his grandson, Samuel ben Meir, known briefly as Rashbam, initials of Rabbi Samuel ben Meir. He, as we have seen above (see Sect. 110), possessed great ability as a commentator, for his commentary on the Pentateuch is of high character, and likewise employed his ability in explaining such portions of the Talmud as were uncommentated. He completed the commentary to the greatest part of the tractate Baba Bathra left unfinished by Rashi (about 150 folios) and also to the tenth chapter of Pesachim where Rashi is very brief. Samuel ben Meir, of course, utilized the notes of Rashi, but added many ingenious explanations of his own. He adopted the method of his grandfather and is very lucid and clear but he could not imitate his wonderful style. He is verbose and confuses the reader with an excessive number of details. It seems, though, that besides completing the gaps in the commentary of his grandfather, he also wrote commentaries to other tractates, but only fragments are left. Another disciple of Rashi, Rabbi Shemayah, completed the last gap in his master's work, and wrote a commentary to tractate Midoth, i. e. measurements, dealing with the measurements of various buildings and parts of the Temple. This tractate contains only Mishnoth, but no Gemarah. He quotes him often and seems to have utilized his notes.

145. THE TOSAFISTS

As was noted, the completion of the commentary of Rashi freed a great quantity of intellectual energy, which was hitherto spent in ascertaining the meaning of the Talmud, and this energy had to be employed by the scholars in another, though allied, field. And it did not take long and the field was found. It is that of the Tosofoth, which literally means additions. The Tosofoth, the writers of which were called Tosafists, continued to be the chief literary productions of the Franco-German Academies for a period of over one hundred and fifty years. They began to appear even in the lifetime of Rashi and continued to the middle of the fourteenth century. The name is a generic one, and includes a number of things, comments, supercomments on commentaries, discussion and analysis, as well as decisions of points of law. But the Tosofoth like the commentaries centered around the Talmud, and hence can be classed as a kind of commentaries, though they are really not so in content.

The principal characteristic of the hundreds of these additions and glosses, is really implied in the very name, Tosofoth, which was already used in early times, such as the Tosefta (see Sect. 50) which meant to complete the Mishnah. Likewise, these Tosofoth were meant to broaden and complete the Talmudic discussion contained in the Gemarah, and of course, to clarify and explain it.

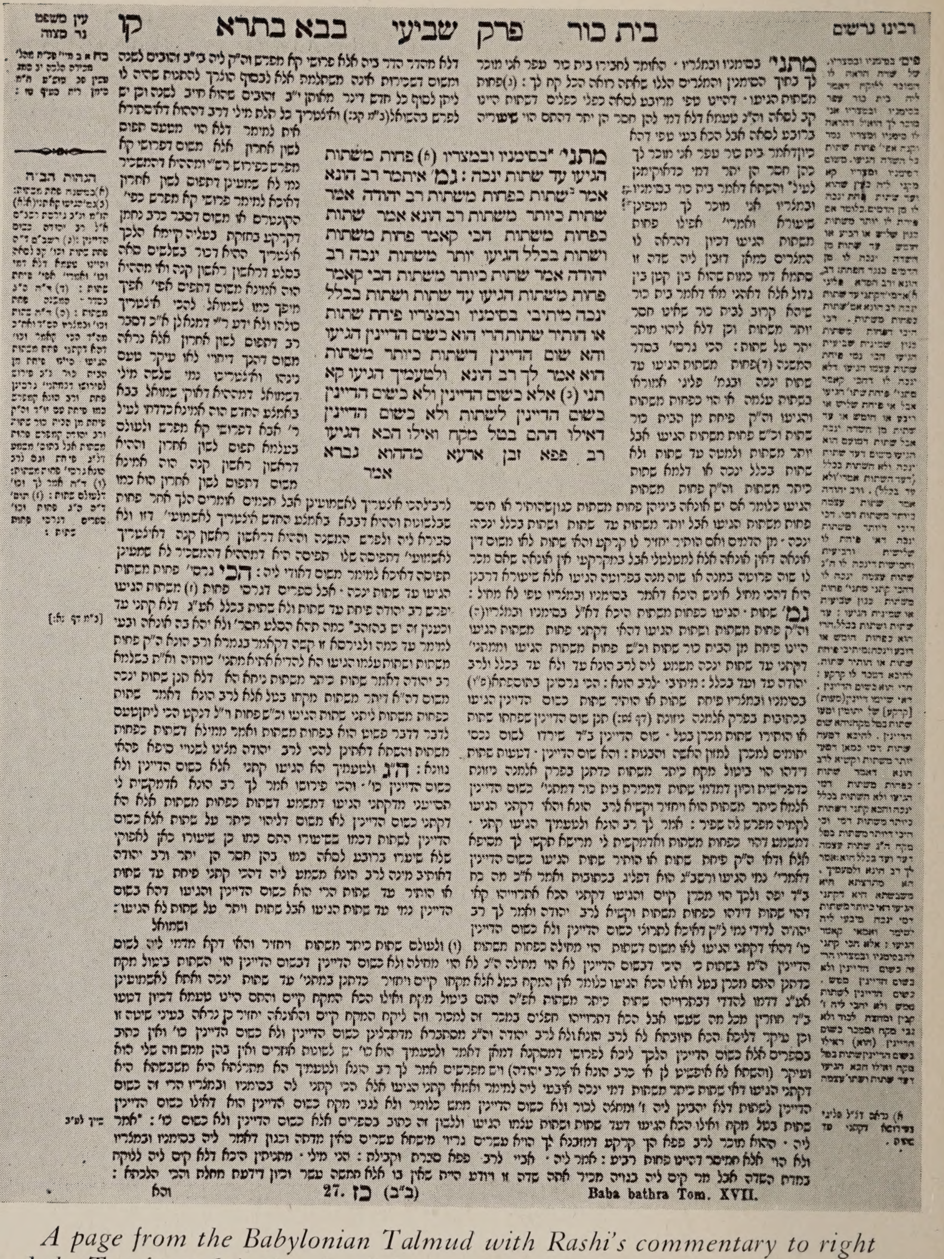
The writing of the Tosofoth was really an attempt to revive the very spirit of the Talmud, the vivacity, depth, and brilliancy of its discussion. That unique kind of discussion which we find in the Gemarah was slumbering for centuries, and was reborn in Northern France, Lorraine and other Rhine provinces. Hitherto, the Talmud was considered a closed book, and all that was left was either to systematize its content, or to establish rules and to explain its passages. But now when the work of mere commenting was done, the keen-minded French and German scholars decided that the Talmud, as a text, may be closed, but the science of the Talmud and its methods were not closed.

The methods of the Tosafists were very similar to the method of the Gemarah in relation with the Mishnah. The Gemarah is indeed a commentary on the Mishnah, but not a mere commentary, only a new creation where analysis is employed to the fullest extent, discussion widens to include a multitude of new subjects and the peacefully flowing stream of the Mishnah turns into a roaring sea of the Talmud. In the same way, can the Tosofoth be called a commentary of the Talmud.

The work started with criticism of the commentaries. In its very beginning, the older "cuntresim" were taken as the basis of criticism, their explanations were scrutinized and tested, refuted or corrected. But soon Rashi's "cuntres" was substituted—the Tosafists always refer to his commentary as "The Cuntres"—and it became the basis for addition and discussion. However, this forms only a small part in the Tosofoth. The main purpose was to delve into the Talmudic discussion itself, to analyze every bit of it, to remove all possible difficulties, to straighten out all contradictions, and to draw sharp distinctions between concepts. These scholars were not satisfied with merely understanding the difficult passages of the Talmud, but they raised difficulties themselves by pointing out the difficulties arising from contrasting one passage with another, and then set out to remove the contradictions.

This method which is often called *pilpul,* i. e. peppery (pilpal, in Talmudic language means a pepper), and is the Hebrew equivalent for scholasticism, is frequently severely criticized and is considered useless effort, but it has great advantage if used properly. In fact, it was the very method of the Talmudists, the Amoraim, and the same method was developed by the Tosafists to its fullest extent. It brought great results, it opened limitless fields for the exercise of the intellect of the scholars, it deepened and broadened the understanding of the Talmud, and finally, it brought forth new decisions in Halakah, inasmuch as the clearer, deeper understanding of the intricacies of the Talmud greatly facilitated the arrival at a decision.

The Tosofoth also resemble the Talmud in their arrangement and order. Like the first, it is a work of generations and is a composite of many parts. A large number of scholars have contributed towards its composition, and finally it was arranged as a unified composition, covering the entire Talmud. It was the work of editors and compilers who pieced together the various parts into one composition. Originally, each scholar wrote Tosofoth to one or more tractates or even to parts of them. These contained comments, objections (Kushioth), and answers to the objections, logical dictinctions and many more things. The students who copied the additions of the master often carried these notes to other academies where they were seen by other masters and students, and these refuted the objections of the others, solved their problems or offered explanations to their difficulties. Thus, there was a constant interchange of opinion, and the objections or difficulties raised by the scholars in one academy were known in the other, and the whole mass of discussion became the common property of the scholarly world. It was, therefore, possible, like in the time of the Talmud, that a scholar in one city should answer an objection to a Talmudic statement raised by a scholar in another city, and the other in turn offered a refutation to the answer. Most of the Tosofoth were composed, like Rashi's commentaries in the academies, in the course of teaching and bear the character of a public discussion, one asks and the other answers, and the third endeavors to reconcile the opinion of both. There were, therefore, many editions of the Tosofoth bearing different names. The later compilers selected various parts from the great mass of Tosofoth notebooks, and arranged them in order to each page of the



רבינו גרשם　　בית כור　　פרק　　שביעי　　בבא בתרא　　קו　　עין משפט נר מצוה

מתני׳ ״בסימניו ובמצריו (א) פחות משתות הגיעו עד שתות ינכה : גמ׳ איתמר רב הונא אמר ״שתות כפחות משתות רב יהודה אמר שתות כיותר משתות רב הונא אמר שתות כפחות משתות הכי קאמר פחות משתות ושתות בכלל הגיעו יותר משתות ינכה רב יהודה אמר שתות כיותר משתות הכי קאמר פחות משתות הגיעו עד שתות ושתות בכלל ינכה מיתיבי בסימניו ובמצריו פיחת שתות או הותיר שתות הרי הוא כשום הדיינן הגיעו והא שום הדיינן דשתות כיותר משתות הוא אמר לך רב הונא ולטעמיך הגיעו קא תני (ג) אלא כשום הדיינן ולא כשום הדיינן בשום הדיינן לשתות ולא כשום הדיינן דאילו התם בטל מקח ואילו הכא הגיעו רב פפא זבן ארעא מההוא גברא אמר

והא　　27. כז (ב״ב)　　Baba bathra Tom. XVII.

A page from the Babylonian Talmud with Rashi's commentary to right and the Tosafot to left. On the right margin is Gershom b. Judah's commentary.

Talmud, dividing it in sections, and even each section is composed of parts, a question or objection of one scholar and an answer from another scholar, very often the answer being given by a scholar of another generation. On the whole there is not much anonymity in the Tosofoth, both the names of the ones who raise the objections, and the ones who remove the difficulty are frequently given. But that there are anonymous statements issuing from the compilers or from other scholars, is needless to say.

The Tosofoth in their last form as appended to the Talmud are arranged in sections. Each section bears as a heading a short quotation from the Talmud, indicating the beginning of the passage to be discussed. In most cases, the discussion begins with an objection, pointing out a difficulty, and then a solution is offered, sometimes several. The question and the answer, or answers, are at times anonymous, but mostly quoted in the names of scholars. Sometimes a refutation to the answer is given, and another answer offered. There are technical terms for the questions and answers. The first is introduced by *Tema,* i. e. "it is to be wondered at," or by *Viim Tomar,* i. e. "in case you say so," namely, in case you anticipate a difficulty, I am ready with an answer. Often the plainer form *Vekoshe,* i. e. "it is difficult," is used. The second is introduced by *Viyesh Loimar,* "it may be said or answered." Quite frequently, the Tosofoth begin with a statement from Rashi whose opinion is criticized, refuted, and another explanation offered, on another occasion, a plain explanation of the Talmudic passage is offered, then analyzed and critically tested. At times, the correctness or a reading (girsa) is discussed, and either it is retained or a better one substituted, for as said, critical commentation was an important function of the Tosafists. In conclusion, we may say, that the Tosofoth are permeated with a spirit of logical acumen, brilliancy of intellect and vivacity which calls for the deepest interest of the student. And not in vain did they exercise a magnetic power over generations of students, and for centuries, in all published editions of the Talmud and in hundreds of manuscripts, occupy the same page with the Gemarah itself, opposite Rashi's commentary.

146. COMPOSERS OF TOSOFOTH

The leaders of the Tosofoth activity were all of the family of Rashi. The very first one to write Tosofoth was Rabbi Meir of Rumpert, the son-in-law of Rashi. He is quoted by his son, Rabbi Jacob, a number of times. He was greatly surpassed by his three sons, Samuel (1080–1140), Jacob (1096–1171), and Isaac (fl. 1150). These three impressed their personality upon this kind of literature. In the printed Tosofoth to the Talmud, they are mentioned frequently, the first by the name of Rashbam, Samuel ben Meir; the second, by the name of Rabenu Tam, i. e. the innocent, or the perfect one, a surname given him on account of his piety and exceptional erudition; the third by the name of Ribom, i. e. Rabbi Isaac ben Meir.

The greatest of the three was Rabbi Tam. He can be said to represent in his own personality the essence of the Tosofoth spirit and was the very soul of it. Born at Rumpert where he received his education from his father, and elder brother Samuel, he also studied for a time in Limoges at the academy of Joseph Tob Elam the second. He later opened an academy in his native town whence his fame spread throughout Jewry, so that he was considered the greatest authority in his age. His word was law, and his decrees (Takanoth) were accepted without murmur. In 1147, on the first day of the Feast of Weeks, Crusaders broke into his house and dragged him out with the intention to kill him or force him into conversion. A knight of his acquaintance who happened to pass by saved him from their hands by taking him into custody. Rabenu Tam shortly afterwards moved to Troyes where he died on the ninth of June, 1171.

His chief work as the *Sepher ha-Yoshar,* namely, the Book of the Righteous which contains his Tosofoth to thirty tractates and legal decisions. But this was not all, his comments and critical remarks to the entire Talmud were spread by word of mouth among the thousands of Talmud students in the academies, and close to a thousand were incorporated in our Tosofoth. His greatness lies in the keenness of his mind. He typifies in his Additions, the Tosofoth method which, as was remarked, is a return to the method of the Amoraim themselves. He penetrated to the very depths of the Halakah, no thread of that intricate web escaped his mind. His method is purely analytical, every statement was tested whether it could remove the difficulties, if we assume differently. If the statement, hypothesis, or opinion stood the test it was pronounced correct. Raising objections and answering them was therefore his favorite method in his study. His motto was, there must be no difficulty in the Talmud, no contradiction, the words of the rabbis are all right and correct. If such occurred, they must be removed. His purpose was not mere mental casuistry, but to obtain by this method the real truth. We, therefore, see him very often turn mere commentator and explain whole pages of Gemarah. He also endeavored to ascertain the right readings, and was very severe with those who carelessly corrected books without first ascertaining whether the reading is really faulty. He himself made many corrections in the Talmud relying mostly upon the Spanish copies, but with great deliberation. Taking into consideration all his accomplishments in the field of scholarship, it is no wonder then that he is quoted in the Tosofoth almost in every page, and often several times in a page, and that his name is inherently connected with the study of the Talmud.

Another great Tosafist, whose name is mentioned almost on every page of the printed Tosofoth, is Rabbi Isaac ben Samuel of Dampierre, France (fl. 1175). He can be considered the second influential personality after Rabenu Tam in the Tosafist activity. Besides the large number of his comments, he is also distinguished by the keenness of his mind which expresses itself in the happy ability to solve difficulties and straighten out contradictions. He was the nephew of Tam, being his sister's son, and undoubtedly was greatly influenced by him. He is usually quoted under the name Ri, i. e. Rabbi Isaac, and very often Ri Hasoken, i. e. Isaac the older, to distinguish him from other scholars who bore the name Isaac. He wrote Tosofoth to a number of tractates, which are quoted by later authors. The comments quoted in our Tosofoth are largely taken from these, plus the hundreds of oral remarks incorporated in the final Tosofoth compilation.

The other outstanding Tosafists are Isaac ben Asher Halevi (fl. 1150) of Speyer, quoted by his initials Riba, i. e. Rabbi Isaac Ben Asher, who wrote and compiled Tosofoth to many Tractates; Rabbi Eliezer ben Nathan of Mayence, quoted by the name of Reban; Isaac ben Mordecai of Regensburgh (fl. 1175); Eliezer ben Samuel of Metz (1195); Isaac Halaban, the white one, of Prague (1175), quoted frequently in our Tosofoth under the name of Ri Halaban, who also wrote Tosofoth of his own and a commentary to the tractate of Ketuboth; Judah ben Isaac of Paris (b. 1166–d. 1224) named Sir Leon, and Baruch ben Isaac of Regensburgh. He is said to be the compiler of our Tosofoth to tractate Zebahim, dealing with the rites of sacrifices, and also wrote Tosofoth to other tractates. Finally, at the end of the twelfth century, we have Isaac ben Abraham of Rumpert, France, who is quoted under the name of Ritsba, i. e. Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham (d. 1205).

The prominent Tosafists of the thirteenth century—the activity is prolonged to that century, and no dividing line can be drawn—are: Simon ben Abraham of Sens (d. 1235 in Acco, Palestine). He is the compiler of our Tosofoth to tractates Sabbath and Menahoth, besides a special collection known as *Sens Tosofoth;* Moses of Coucy (d. 1245) compiler of Tosofoth known as *Old Tosofoth;* Samuel of Evreux (1245), compiler of the printed Tosofoth to tractate Sotah, besides a collection of his own; Isaac of Corbeil (fl. 1270), quoted frequently in our Tosofoth; Eliezer of Tuch, author of a collection under the name of *Tosofoth Tuch* from which our Tosofoth to tractates Hullin and Gittin are taken; Meir ben Baruch of Rothenberg (fl. 1270–1293) (see Sect. b) and Rabbi Peretz ben Elijah of Corbeil. This Rabbi Peretz is one of the last compilers of the printed Tosofoth. The edition of Tosofoth to six tractates: Betzah, Nadarim, Nasir, Sanhedrin, Makoth, and Meila came from his collection. Besides these enumerated, there were many more scholars who contributed to the Tosofoth and whose works were incorporated in their various versions.

The Tosofoth printed in our Talmud edition cover thirty-eight tractates of the Talmud and were compiled by various men. We know only the names of the compilers to sixteen tractates. To the list of authors named above, we may add Moses of Evereux, brother of Samuel (1245), who compiled the Tosofoth to Berakoth, and Samuel of Falaise (1245) who compiled the same to tractate Aboda Zara. The rest bear an anonymous character. Besides those printed in the Talmud edition, there are several collections of Tosofoth in manuscripts under different names. They are (a) *Old Tosofoth,* including the Sens collection compiled by Simon ben Abraham, and separate treatises by various men; (b) *Tuch Tosofoth* collection, compiled as stated above by Eliezer of Tuch; (c) *External Tosofoth,* a later collection, and Marginal Tosofoth, glosses and additions to the standard collection. These are the principal collections, but there are also a large number of smaller ones, individual glosses to one or more tractates. These belong mostly to the last period of the Tosafist activity, namely, the beginning of the fourteenth century, when it dwindled down to mere individual efforts and lost its intensity and vigor.

147. TALMUD COMMENTATORS IN ITALY AND THE PROVENCE

The Talmud study in Italy was very intense for centuries, and in the dim centuries of the early Middle Ages, Italy was the source of

Torah for almost all the countries of Western Europe, as we saw above. But, unfortunately, the names of the scholars were forgotton. Only in the early part of the tenth century, we hear of one Jacob Gaon, the head of an academy at Rome. Later in that century, a few more scholars are mentioned, one of whom is Rabbi Matzliah Albatzek of Sicily. He is said to have had communication with Hai Gaon of Babylonia, but none of his books are left, only stray comments to Talmudic passages which are quoted by his successors. Other scholars of this age were Moses Halpho of Bari, and Jehiel of Rome whose comments were also incorporated in the works of their successors.

148. NATHAN BEN JEHIEL OF ROME

At the end of the tenth century, there arose in Italy a man whose contribution both to the lexicography and the exegesis of the Talmud is of great and lasting value. This man was Nathan ben Jehiel (1020–1106) of Rome. He was remarkably equipped for his great task, as hardly anyone in his generation surpassed him in his knowledge of Talmudic literature. No passage or statement in any of the books of this great mass of literature escaped his attention, whether it was Halakic or Agadic. Besides he was a linguist who mastered a number of languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Latin, and even some Greek. His teachers in Talmud and Agada were Rabbi Matzliah of Sicily, Rabbi Moses Hadarshan (the preacher) of Narbonne (Ch. VI), and Rabbi Gershon, the Light of the Exile. His great work is *the Aruch,* a lexicon and dictionary of all the words of Talmudic literature, alphabetically arranged.

But it is really not a mere dictionary, but a veritable encyclopedia, as not only does Rabbi Nathan quote, as examples, passages from the entire Talmudic and Midrashic literature including the Targumic where such words and expressions are found, but he also explains the passages. It is thus an alphabetical commentary. In his explanations, he quotes comments from all great men of his time, and also from many Gaonim. He, therefore, preserved for us hundreds of documents from scholars which would otherwise have been lost, as the works from which they are excerpted are lost. Great value is also attached to his quotations from many Talmudic and Agadic books, for besides that they contain correct readings in many places where our editions are erroneous, there are numerous quotations from books, especially Agadic ones which are lost, and their existence can only be traced through these quotations. Likewise valuable, are his lexicographic remarks, as he gives the origin of hundreds of words and expressions in Talmudic literature, and traces their sources to various Semitic languages, to the various Targumim, some of which are lost, and also offers Latin and Greek parallels. In addition he supplied many data of historical importance, comments on customs and ways of Jewish life in his own and former times.

In his arrangements, he follows the biliteral system of Hebrew roots, the one adopted by the French and German scholars, the one followed by Rashi, and most of his words are arranged in accordance with the biliteral view, but he also believes that there are a number of roots of one letter only. There are many more services performed by this great work, but that would require giving many details. In general, it may be said that the *Aruch* is the basis of all modern lexicographical works on the Talmud, for without his comments, and especially without the vast material of examples from the entire Talmudic, Targumic and Agadic literature collected there, no modern scholar could have undertaken writing a dictionary to the Talmud.

The *Aruch* was published in many editions, and later with additions and improvements. The most noted editions are the ones published at Amsterdam in 1655, which contains the additions by Benjamin Musphia, a physician at Hamburg, where all words derived from Greek and Latin are lucidly explained, and their derivation traced, and that of Dr. Alexander Kohut bearing the name of *Aruch Completum,* in eight volumes, where the *Aruch* is much enlarged by many additions and the meaning of the words given in German.

A younger contemporary of Rabbi Nathan was a commentator of the Mishnah, Rabbi Isaac, son of Malki Tzedek, or as he is called Rabbi Isaac of Simponto. He wrote commentaries to the first and last orders of the Mishnah, i. e. Zeraim and Taharoth, his commentaries are brief and intended only to explain the meaning of the passages and his method is similar to that of Rashi. It is not known whether he had seen Rashi's commentary or not, as we know very little about him and can not determine his time accurately. But from the quotations by other scholars, we can safely assume that he lived not later than the first half of the twelfth century.

The Tosafist activity also found an echo in Italy. It seems that the twelfth century was a period of intensive Talmudic study there, and at the end of the century, the results became evident. A great number of scholars arose, and the greatest of them was Rabbi Isaiah Di Troni (1180–1260). He hailed from the city of Troni in the province of Bari, an old center of Jewish learning, but lived most of his life at Venice. He distinguished himself both as commentator and Tosafist of the Talmud. He wrote Tosofoth to a large number of tractates under the name of *Tosophot Rid,* i.e. Rabbi Isaiah Di Troni. A large portion of his Tosofoth is still extant in manuscript; those to two tractates, Kidushin and Ketuboth, are published. In his additions he adopted both ways, that of Rashi and that of the Tosafists. They contain a large number of plain and lucid explanations, but also much analytic and pilpulistic remarks, in the way of the French Tosafists. Whenever he turns commentator, he uses a clear style and displays great ability to explain knotted passages. He also utilized secular sciences in explaining Talmudic subjects and was not ashamed to consult specialists in those sciences on difficult points. He was a great lover of truth, and expressed his opinion only, without bowing to authority. Isaiah Di Troni is the outstanding Talmudic scholar in Italy during the thirteenth century and his authority was recognized by all, even outside the bounds of Italy. He also wrote codes and decisions, but of those later.

149. THE PROVENCE SCHOOL OF COMMENTATION—ZERACHIA HALEVI.

That part of Southern France, which in Mediæval Ages was known as the Provence, was slowly developing during the eleventh and twelfth centuries into a great center of Jewish learning and literature. Being situated between the three great intellectual centers, Spain, Italy, and Franco-Germany, it was destined to be a meeting point for all different views and systems of various literary currents, and fortunately its scholars knew how to utilize the opportunity and blend those currents into an harmonious stream. We have noted already (Chs. VII, VIII), the Provence contribution to grammar, lexicography, and Biblical exegesis, and we will now survey briefly its contribution to Talmudic study. Like their brethren in the north of France, the Jews of Provence considered the study of the Talmud the hightest degree of perfection, and its study was intense. There were many academies in a number of cities, at Narbonne an old center of learning (see above), Lunel, and other places, as well as great scholars, of whom a very prominent one was Zerachia Halevi of Lunel.

Rabbi Zerachia (b. 1125 d. 1186) was born in Spain, but his family having immigrated to Girondi in the Provence, he followed them there, studied at Narbonne, and ultimately settled at Lunel, which was also the residence of the Tibbon family, the famous translators, and many more scholars. Zerachia was considered a great authority in his generation, and his erudition was profound.

He can be considered a commentator of the Talmud indirect. His chief work is the *Sefer ha-Moer,* i. e. the book of light or luminary.[7] It is primarily a critical commentary containing additions to the Compendium of the Talmud by Isaac Al-Fasi (see Sect. B.). But as this Compendium contains a large part of the Talmud, his commentary and remarks explain whole sections of the Talmud. Zerachia displayed great mental acumen in his commentary. He analyzes sharply the views and decisions of former scholars, especially those of Al-Fasi, Rashi, and other authorities. His love for truth was unbounded, and he takes as his motto in his introduction to his book *ha-Moer* the maxim of the ancients, "I love Plato, I love Aristotle, but love the truth more than both of them." This motto expresses his attitude towards his predecessors. He speaks of them with great reverence but criticizes their opinions and views with remarkable openness and frankness. Rabbi Zerachia was also a noted religious poet and wrote many poems in meter and rhyme, and a number of them are included in the Mahsor of the Sephardic Jews.

150. ABRAHAM BEN DAVID OF POSQUIERS

The other great Provence scholar of this generation was Abraham ben David of Posquiers (1125–1198). His erudition was great and equally great his piety. Unlike other Provence scholars, he devoted very little time to other studies but concentrated all his energy on the study of the Talmud and Law. Being a rich man, he utilized his wealth in the spreading of the knowledge of the Torah as he practically supported all the students of the academy who were in need of aid. His name spread far and wide, and his authority was recognized by scholars of many lands.

His work expressed itself primarily in criticism of the methods and views of the commentators and codifiers. He wrote critical remarks to the Compendium of Al-Fasi, Refutations to the *ha-Moer* of Zerachia Halevi, and is especially famous for his refutation to the Code of Maimonides. On account of this tendency, and especially of his belligerent style in his refutations, he was named Rabad (Rabbi Abraham ben David), the Master of Refutation. But he was also a good and productive commentator. He has written commentaries to a number of tractates of the Mishnah. His commentaries to Edyiot, Kinim, and Tamid are published. His method as a commentator is close to the pilpulistic one, as he not only explains the Mishnoth, but also offers a number of explanations to one passage and tests each one by attempting to refute them until he finds the right one which can not be refuted. He displays great knowledge of Talmudic literature in all its phases and draws upon all sources for elucidation of a passage. In general, it seems that he did not intend his commentary for students but for scholars, and is therefore at times very deep and difficult. But the scholar who is already versed in the ways of the Talmud will find great joy in his penetrating and all-embracive way. He was also the first man who turned his attention to commentate other Halakic books besides the Talmud. He wrote a commentary on the *Safro,* the Tannaitic Halakic Midrash to Leviticus. His commentary to that book is a very clear and lucid one and made the book accessible to students. There he also included an extensive commentary to the Bariatha (Sect. 57) of the Thirteen *Midoth,* i. e. rules or norms of the interpretation of the Bible (see Pt. I, Ch. III) where he discusses the application of these rules in the formation of the Halakah.

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[7] We already noted that the euphemistic names of the books written by Mediæval authors contain some hidden meaning. In the case of Zerachia, the name of *Hamoer* refers both to his own name which in Hebrew means shining and to the name of his city, i. e. Lunel meaning the Moon. This city is very often quoted by authors as Yoreach, Hebrew for moon, which is a Hebrew translation of the French name. His book has two parts Hamoer Hakoton, smaller luminary, i. e. moon, and Hamoer Hagodol, i. e. sun, referring to his own name, Zerachia.

B. Codes

151. EARLY ATTEMPTS

The Mishnah, as we have seen (Ch. V) was not only a textbook of Halakic study, but also indirectly a code. The Talmud, however, or more specifically the Gemarah, was not a code. It analyzed and commented the Mishnah and added many things to it, but left no definite decisions, only here and there, it indicated the decision. With the close of the Talmud there was still a want for a clear-cut practical code. But the need was not felt, for the successors of the *Amoraim,* the *Saburaim,* were too close to the Talmud, and they could orientate themselves in it, and arrive at practical decisions in the Talmud proper. The only thing that these Saburaim did was to compile certain rules for decision, namely, indicating who of the Amoraim is more reliable and whose opinion should be taken in a contest. These rules are incorporated in the Talmud proper and are ascribed to these very Saburaim. Thus, we see that very little was done in the way of code making during the first two centuries after the close of the Talmud.

Yet, some attempts were made at codification even in these early times. To these there should be considered the seven small tractates which were added after the close of the Talmud during the time of the Saburaim or early Gaonic period. These are (*1*) that on the scroll writing (Sepher Torah); (*2*) Mesuza; (*3*) Tephilin (phylacteries); (*4*) Zitzith (fringes); (*5*) On slaves; (*6*) Samaritans; (*7*) and Proselytes (Gerim). As can be seen, they all deal with practical questions, and to a great extent with ritual, for with the exception of the tractate on the Samaritans which is most likely of Palestinian origin, they are all of a practical nature, as even the questions of treatment of slaves and the acceptance of Proselytes were of daily concern. To these should be added the tractate of *Sopherim* dealing with the rules of writing the Holy Scroll, as well as phylacteries and other sacred writings, and also with the synagogue ritual. All these small tractates are really attempts at partial codification, for the matters dealt with there are given in the form of decisions, and no differences of opinion are quoted. As a rule, the opinions are given anonymously, but even if it is quoted in the name of a Tanna or Amorah, only his statement is given.

There are also several books of decisions of Gaonic origin, one of them is called *Shimusha Rabba*—i. e. the large Book of Practice. A large fragment of it is contained in the writings of the early codifiers. It deals with the laws of Phylacteries (Tephilin) and most likely it dealt with other subjects.

152. BABYLONIAN CODES

As years passed, the need for a code or codes grew more and more. From distant places, where the study of the Talmud was just in its beginning, there came constant inquiries to the Gaonim in Babylonia concerning practical decisions. The inquirers asked for rules of action. The first Responsa (see Sect. C) just gave short answers to the correspondents and tendered decisions. These Responsa too belong partly to the code literature. But soon in Babylonia proper, the need arose in equal measure, for no more did people live in the atmosphere of the Talmud. It thus happens that during the second half of the eighth century, three codes were produced by men who were practically contemporaries.

The first of these is the *Sheiltoth,* i. e. problems, by Rabbi Achai Gaon (fl. 748–760). Rabbi Achai, though a leading scholar in the Academy of Pumbedita, was not, for some political reason, appointed as the head of the Academy at the death of Rab Samuel in 756. His disciple, Rab Natrui, was appointed instead. This slight on the part of the Exilarch (Resh Golutha) angered the master, and Rab Achai left Babylonia and settled in Palestine. It is not, however definitely known where he wrote the Sheiltoth whether in Babylonia in his younger years, or in Palestine. The form of the Sheiltoth points to the time of residence of Rabbi Achai in Babylonia, as it is a compilation of Halakic discourses actually delivered at the Academy.

The *Sheiltoth,* contains one hundred ninety-one discourses which are intended as answers to questions stated in the beginning of the discourse. They are arranged according to the sections of the Pentateuch which are read in the Synagogue and are also based on the order of the precepts (Mitzvoth) as they are presented in the Pentateuch. It might be a collection of actual oral discourses held on Sabbaths, either by Rabbi Achai himself, or even by former Gaonim. We know that such discourses were held, as we find in the Midrash Yelamdenu (see Ch. VI) that the Agadic discourses begin with an Halakic question.

The purpose of the Book is to explain the precepts (Mitzvoth) in accordance with the views of the Talmud and other Halakic books. The author has therefore abstracted the essence of Talmudic opinion concerning each precept discussed and placed it in connection with the Biblical section where such precept is either directly stated or implied. The gist of Talmudic opinion is given in the very words of the Talmud by selecting the important passages scattered both in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds as well as in other sources dealing with the subject. The passages selected contain important statements embodying the results of the discussion, minus the discussion itself. For instance, in the discourse to the first section of Genesis, where the Sabbath is mentioned for the first time the question of the Sabbath is discussed, and all passages bearing on its enjoyment (oneg Shaboth) are given and decisions rendered. The discourses to the section Noah deal (*1*) with the precept to marry and beget children, and passages concerning this duty are adduced, (2) with the prohibition to eat a torn limb of a living animal, as these two precepts are referred to in this section of the Bible saying: And God blessed Noah and his children and He said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill up the earth" (Gen. IX, 1), and also, "But flesh with the life thereof which is the blood thereof, ye shall not eat." (Ibid. 4.) The first half of the last verse is interpreted by the Talmud as an injunction against eating any limb from a living animal, hence the discourses of Achai. To the section of Lech-Lecha [8] where the precept of circumcision is stated, namely, God commanding Abraham to circumcise himself and his household, a discourse on the laws and regulations of circumcision is given, stating all practical decisions, and thus the entire Pentateuch is covered. In most cases, the decision is directly stated by the words, "And thus is the law," at times, the selected passages speak for themselves.

The discourses consist mostly of two parts, one which begins by the word Sheilta, i. e. question, which states briefly the subject or the law, and then follow the passages to show its origin and derivation. The second part begins usually with the words, "But it is necessary to deduce." This part is intended to solve an additional problem, or remove some doubt concerning a certain law, or rule, or custom. The relation of the discourse to the Pentateuch portion is not always direct. Very often Halakic discourses are given on a certain portion where the laws discussed are not stated explicitly, but are only remotely implied. Thus, to the portion of *Vayigash* (Gen. XLIV, 18, XLVII, 31) where it is stated (XLIV, 22) that Judah guaranteed Jacob the safety of Benjamin, a discourse on the laws of surety and guaranty is given. At times, the subject discussed bears no relation at all to the content of the portion. Due to the fact that the author follows the order of the Pentateuch, subjects are repeated and scattered, so the laws of the Sabbath which are mentioned a number of times in the Bible are scattered through various portions where the observance of the Sabbath is mentioned, and some laws are repeated.

The book has come down to us in an incomplete form, for the discourses touch only on one hundred forty-five precepts, sixty-eight positive commandments (Mitzvoth Ase) and seventy-seven prohibitions

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[8] The Hebrew Bible is divided not only into chapters, but also into larger sections, or portions, each portion being the reading assigned for each week of the year in the Babylonian reading cycle which covers the entire Pentateuch in one year. These weekly portions or sections were named after the opening word of the first sentence, or those succeeding the opening words. Thus the first section is named Bereshith, i. e. in the beginning, the first word, the second, Noah, which occurs in the opening sentence, the third, *Lech Lecha*—being the fifth and sixth words in the sentence: And God said unto Abraham Lech Lecha, Get thee forth, these words forming the burden of the entire sentence, etc.

(Mitzvoth Lotaase) and also forty-six Rabbinical precepts or customs. It must have originally contained all the six hundred and thirteen precepts. As the purpose of the book was to be a practical one, the author has paid due attention to ethical precepts, and quotes a considerable number of ethical Agadic passages. It has also a great theoretical value, for it served also as a compendium of the Talmud on all such subjects discussed there, and served as a textbook to those who did not want to study the intricate discussions of the Talmud proper and preferred to have the gist of it on certain subjects. It was thus a forerunner of the great compendia which followed.

The *Sheiltoth* was the first definite attempt at compiling a code. It did not take long and other authors began to compile codes. The second code was the work of Judai Gaon (756–770). It is what is known as *Halakoth P'sukoth,* or *Halakoth K'tuoth,* i. e. either Halakic decisions, or cut-off Halakoth. They are at times called *Halakoth K'tzuboth,* namely, measured ones. All these peculiar names were given them for the reason that the collections initiated a new way in codifying the law, and that is merely quoting the decision without quoting the source. This is practically the way of a real code. But Jewish opinion never favored such methods, for there was always the lurking fear that the adopting of such a method will jeopardize the study of the Talmud. We see, therefore, two tendencies henceforth in the codification of the law, one that of giving the law without the source, and one gives the source and then the deductions. The former is best exemplified in the great code of Maimonides, the other in that of Al-Fasi. The period under discussion gave rise to both methods, the Sheiltoth to the second, and the Halakoth Pesukoth to the first.

Of the code of Judai Gaon only fragments remain. Most likely, a great part of it was incorporated in the later codes, and in various collections of Gaonic Responsa of later origin which also bear that name.[9] The third great code is the *Halakoth Gedoloth,* i. e. the large collection of Halakoth. About the authorship of this book, there is great divergence of opinion among earlier authorities. Some believed the author to be the same Judai Gaon who wrote the *Halakoth Pesukoth,* others, among whom is the great Jewish historian of the Mediæval Ages, Abraham Ibn Daud (see Ch. XIV), assert that the author of the book is one

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[9] One such collection, also called Halakoth Pesukoth, was published in Constantinople in 1693 and republished by Joel Miller in 1893. It contains decisions on various laws by a number of Gaonim.

Simon of Cairo who originally hailed from Cairo, Egypt, but later settled in Babylonia. This opinion seems to be the right one. This Simon Kaira flourished in the second half of the eighth century, and although he was a great scholar, as evidenced by his book, he, like Rabbi Achai, never received an official appointment as Gaon. The author must undoubtedly have seen the brief code of Rabbi Judai, for the name the large Halakoth indicates that the new code is distinguished from an earlier smaller one.

The *Halakoth Gedoloth* follow partly the *Sheiltoth* in method, inasmuch as it is likewise a compendium of the sources of Talmudic law, and what is more a real compendium of the Talmud. The book is arranged according to the tractates of the Talmud, but with important changes. The author was the first one to give a detailed list of the six hundred and thirteen precepts (Mitzvoth) which are said to be contained in the Pentateuch, thus affording a basis for the entire Jewish law. Yet he did not follow that method in his compendium, but as said, he took the order of the Talmud. His great contribution, however, is his systematic grouping of the Talmudic law. In the Talmud, the order is loose, one tractate contains several subjects, and one subject may be scattered through several tractates. The author of this Code grouped all laws concerning one subject under one head. For instance, the first tractate of the Talmud, Berachoth, deals with all forms of prayer and benedictions, but the benedictions of the sanctification of the Sabbath (Kidush) and that on the departure of the Sabbath (Habdalah) which are pronounced over a cup of wine and are important ceremonies, are hardly dealt with in that tractate. They are treated in the tenth chapter of the tractate Pesahim. Our author has therefore abstracted the laws discussed in that chapter concerning these benedictions and placed them immediately after his compendium of the tractate Berachoth so as to have the entire subject of prayers and benedictions complete. He likewise follows a logical system in other places. At the end of his abstract of the Talmudic order, Moed, which deals with the Sabbath and holidays and all their regulations, he placed several small collections of law concerning mourning, the reading of the law, the putting on of phylacteries (Tephilin), and the wearing of Tzitzith (fringes). These subjects are scattered in a number of tractates. But our author followed a more logical and consecutive order. The last tractate of the order of Moed, Moed Katan, deals with the laws of the semi-holidays, what is called Hol Hamoed, the intervening of days between the first and last days of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, but it likewise treats of some laws of mourning, as certain injunctions concerning cessation of work applies to both the semi-holiday and period of mourning. Our author has, therefore, thought it logical to collect at this place all laws of mourning, and on completing these, he brought together also all laws concerning priests, for the injunction that they should not defile themselves by touching a dead body makes that subject contiguous to the preceding one. On the other hand, the laws concerning priests contain also regulations regarding priestly benediction in the synagogue which is a part of the ritual, hence, the other laws of the synagogue ritual follow, such as the reading of the law. These, in turn have similarities with the laws of phylacteries and the others, so they are grouped together. Our author has introduced changes of grouping in all other departments of Jewish law, and at times, when one Talmudic tractate contains several subjects of law, he breaks it up into the various subjects, and treats each separately. The tractate of Baba Bathra treats of the laws of buying and selling, partnership, of inheritance, and other matters. These subjects are scattered throughout the tractate, parts in one chapter and parts in another. Our author separates the subjects and groups the passages under the various heads.

The grouping system is, however, not carried out to perfection, for the author, in following also the order of the Talmudic tractates and giving an abstract of their discussion, is at times forced to treat of several subjects at once, but on the whole, he endeavors to maintain a logical consecutiveness.

The method of codification is, as stated, by giving the gist of the Talmudic discussion. The *Halakoth Gedoloth* gives a more extensive extract than the *Sheiltoth,* and quotes different opinions but is careful to indicate the decision. The author quotes also decisions of individual Gaonim and their comments. Quite often, he states the law briefly at the beginning of the subjects, and then the abstract of the sources follow. He has, of course, utilized other sources besides the Babylonian Talmud and quotes at times the Palestinian Talmud and the Tosefta, as well as the Tannaitic Midrashim, but not to a great extent.

As the purpose of the book was a practical one, the author has left out all such groups of laws which after the destruction of the Temple became inoperative, such as the laws of sacrifice, all that relate to the Temple service, laws of clean and unclean (Tumoh Vetahara). He therefore omits the abstraction of all such tractates or parts of tractates dealing with such subjects, with a few exceptions. He does have abstracts of several tractates of the order of Kadashim, but only of such parts dealing with laws practiced at all times.

The *Halakoth Gedoloth,* thus, by his grouping system afforded a basis for later codifiers who followed in his footsteps more or less. The book as we have it today seems to have been edited by later hands who made a number of additions. We find there also quotations from the *Sheiltoth* which can not be determined whether they were incorporated by the author himself or by the later editors, as most likely Simon Kaira, the author of the book, was a contemporary of Rab Achai, and we do not know whether he had already seen the *Sheiltoth* or not.

During the following hundred and fifty years, there were hardly any codes composed with the exception of a practical code containing laws and regulations of the liturgy. This is the *seder,* i.e. order of the prayers, of Amram Gaon (term of office 846–864). This seder gives a detailed order of the prayers and their text for the whole year, besides all the laws affecting the liturgy as well as all regulations concerning ceremonial observances of the Sabbath and holidays. This order of Rab Amram was accepted as the basic order of the standard prayer book almost by all Jewry, though there are in both the later Sephardic (Nusach Sephard) and the German (Nusach Ashkinaz) prayer books a great number of variations in the texts of the individual prayers, as well as additional prayers. On the whole, though, the Sephardic prayer book is very close to that of Rab Amram, as his *Seder* was compiled at the request of a community in Spain and sent to them. It was, therefore, used there for centuries and the modifications were introduced later.

The last codifiers of the Gaonic period were Saadia, Samuel ben Hofni and Hai. The first wrote a number of small codes on various groups of laws such as (*1*) on inheritance, (2) on pledges, (*3*) on testimony and contracts, (*4*) on unity, (*5*) on gifts. All these are part of a code in civil law. Several small codes on other subjects are attributed to him, among which are those on Prohibited Marriages, on Defilement and Purity, on the Gifts due to Priests, and on Meat Prohibited for Food (Terepha). Most of these are known to us by quotation, but the book on inheritance is preserved to us in its entirety. It is written in Arabic and was the first code of Jewish laws written in another language, besides the Hebrew and Aramaic.

Saadia adopted the method of Judai Gaon giving merely legal statements, without reference to the sources, but he has made great improvement upon the first crude attempt. He brought to the work of codification his knowledge of logic and systematization employed by him in his other studies. He lays down at first general principles then deduces the laws which follow from the application of these principles. He also divides the laws embraced in a subject into certain classes and subdivisions, thus facilitating the matter of decisions for the student. His codes were a muster to the successive codifiers who followed in his way and adopted his method.

Rab Hai Gaon, the last Gaon of Pumbedita, also wrote a number of codexes on civil law. They are on Buying and Selling (Mekach U-Memkar), on Pledges, on Loans, on Conditions in Transactions, and on the Oath (Shaarē Shebuoth). All these books were written in Arabic and were translated into Hebrew. The first and the last were translated by Isaac Albarceloni in the year 1078, the others by an anonymous translator. The first book which is the largest contains sixty chapters or portals dealing with all forms of buying and selling transactions. It is very logically arranged and follows more the pure code method, yet not entirely, for not only are the laws stated but their derivation from the sources is given briefly. At times, even a comment is offered on some of the passages quoted. The same method is followed in the book on the oath and the other codexes.

The father-in-law of Hai, Samuel ben Hofni, the last Gaon of Sura, also wrote a number of small codes, both on subjects of civil and ritual law but most of them were lost as they were written in Arabic, with the exception of one on Benedictions (Berakoth) which was translated into Hebrew.

Besides these special codes, we have from the Gaonic periods thousands of Responsa which contain decisions in law in all its phases, and collectively, they make a complete code though not expressed in an orderly manner.

153. THE NORTH-AFRICAN AND SPANISH SCHOOLS OF CODIFIERS

The work of the scholars of North Africa and that of Spain was, as we have already seen, really a continuation of that of the Gaonim of Babylonia, as they were the real heirs of the latter, being close to the Gaonic view of things and followers of their method. It is, therefore, expected that the codification work of these schools should resemble in character that of the Gaonic, and the expectation is amply justified, both methods of codification described above, which were used by the early codifiers attained their perfection at the hands of various representatives of these schools. The early codifiers of North Africa were the above-mentioned scholars, Rab Hanannel and Rab Nisim. The first wrote a code under the name of *Miktzooth,* i. e. Special Subjects. The book, as evident from the copious quotations in later codes, was a collection of decisions by Gaonim and also his own decisions on a number of legal subjects. But they seem to have been arranged according to a certain order, most likely the Talmudic order. They covered a large part of religious and civil law, as the quotations refer to various subjects, such as to the laws of prayer and synagogue ritual, and the like, on the one hand, and to laws of commercial documents, oaths, pledges, and property on the other. The book seems to have been lost, only a few fragments are extant in a manuscript. But we are not certain whether the fragments will not turn out be merely a compilation of quotations.

To Rab Nisim is ascribed a partial code book by the name of *Megilath Setorim,* i. e. a Secret Scroll. We know, however, very little of its nature and character. The book seems to have contained also comments on Talmudic passages besides some decisions.

Turning to the Spanish school, we meet in quite early times, probably in the middle of the tenth century, a work of codification of importance, quoted under various names, such as *Hefetz,* desire, and *Sepher ha-Mitzvoth.* The book is ascribed to one Rab Hefetz ben Yatzliach, whose age and residence are not definitely known. He is mentioned by different titles, as Aluph, prince or leader, Rosh Kalah, head of a group of scholars and Gaon. All these titles were used in the Babylonian Academies, and bestowed by them at times on scholars of other countries. It has been suggested by some that he was a resident of Babylonia, by others of Palestine, still others placed him in Kairwan, and others in Spain. The last assertion seems to be the more probable. The book itself is a code arranged according to the various precepts and decisions of previous codifiers quoted. The book was written in Arabic and is well preserved, and was recently published in this country by the late Dr. B. Halper.

Of the first scholars, at the rise of Jewish learning in Spain, almost nothing is left in the field of law codification except a few Responsa. It is only with Samuel Hanagid (see above Ch. VII) that the code literature begins to develop. The Nagid is said to have written a code named *Hilkto Gvarto,* i. e. decisive Halakoth. No part of it is extant except quotations by later authors. From these we can see that the book contained a collection of laws on various subjects, arranged on the order of the tractates of the Talmud, but it was probably more like a code without lengthy source quotations.

His contemporary, Isaac Ibn Giat (see Ch. IX and X, Sect. A) also compiled a code which was preserved under the name of *Portals of Joy* (Shaarē Simcha) inasmuch as it deals with laws relating to the holidays. It follows the usual method of collecting the various decisions in the Talmud, plus the added decisions of the Gaonim. The order was not the Talmudic one but the subject system, namely, that all decisions both Talmudic and Gaonic, are collected under the heading of the subject.

154. ISAAC AL-FASI

All the afore-described works of codifying pale in worth and value as compared with the Magnum Opus of Isaac Al-Fasi (see Sect. A of this ch.). His work was originally named *Halakoth,* but is more popularly known after his own name, Al-Fasi. In his work, the source method of codifying reached its height. It surpasses in value and bulk all previous compendia of the Talmud, such as the *Halakoth Gedoloth* and others, for this is the real compendium of the Talmud. The work can best be characterized by calling it an abridgment of the larger part of the Talmud. He has not tried to collect the sources of a certain group of laws and arrange them under the heading of that group, but has taken tractate after tractate, and abridged it, omitting from the Talmudic discussion all that is unnecessary and leaving only such passages which bear directly on the subject of the law discussed in the Mishnah. The decision then becomes evident. When a difference of opinion is quoted a statement is added that the law is according to this or that opinion. At times, the decision becomes evident by inclusion and exclusion, namely, that since one opinion is given by Al-Fasi while the other is omitted, it follows that the one included is the right one. Where there has been a later Gaonic interpretation of a certain Talmudic law altering it, or some regulation has been added by Gaonim or a new law enacted, they are all mentioned.

Though as a rule, he abridges the discussion of the Talmud in the proper order, yet when the case requires, he quotes passages from other places bearing on the subject in hand, and also utilizes the Palestinian Talmud when that one does not differ with the Babylonian.

The *Halakoth* of the Al-Fasi is not mere abridgment work, but a work executed with great skill and remarkable erudition for it required great ability to exercise the right judgment in selecting the proper opinion. Rabbi Isaac is quite independent in his judgment, and he differs frequently with the opinions of the Gaonim. He usually lets the Talmud speak for itself, but when the case requires, he extends a passage and analyzes it deeply, deducing from the discussion all possible phases of the law. He is then very systematic, using logical divisions of the subject. That for his purpose, he not only had to select the passages and decide between opinions, but also to comment and explain hundreds of Talmudic passages goes without saying. Al-Fasi also established a number of methodological and interpretative rules of the Talmud. In his explanations and additions to the actual passages of the Talmud, Al-Fasi often employed the Arabic tongue. Not only are certain words explained in Arabic, but whole subjects are commented upon in Arabic. These commentaries come usually at the end of the tractates as separate sections. The purpose of Al-Fasi in making his abridgment of the Talmud was to obviate the danger of minimized Talmud study, and lack of knowledge of sources. In this time, many of the rabbis neglected the study of the Talmud and rendered decisions according to Gaonic Responsa and compilations of decisions, and he feared that perhaps the interest in the Talmud proper will wane altogether. To remedy this, he supplied a code which not only gives the decisions, but the most essential parts of the Talmud proper. He believed that the study of his abridgment will arouse the students to study also the unabridged edition of the Talmud.

Having the practical purpose in mind, he abridged only those tractates which bear on the laws in practice even after the destruction of the Temple and omitted such tractates which deal with sacrifices and other matters not in practice today. Such matters of law which are not dealt with in separate tractates but are scattered in a number of them, he grouped together under their respective subjects. Thus, he has a group known as *Halakoth K'tanoth,* i.e. minor Halakoth dealing with the laws of phylacteries (Tephilin) fringes (Tzitzith) and scroll writing.

The compendium of Al-Fasi became not only a subject of study but also an object of commentaries and a center of literary activity. Zerachia Halevi wrote additions and refutations to the *Al-Fasi* (see Sect. A above). Likewise, Abraham ben David of Posquiers wrote comments and *novellae* to the book. Many wrote commentaries; Jonathan ben David of Lunel (twelfth century) was the first one to write a commentary to one of the tractates abridged by Al-Fasi. Rabbi Nisin ben Reuben (fourteenth century) wrote a commentary to most of the *Al-Fasi,* and thus through the ages, scholar after scholar has added his novellæ, comments, and remarks to the work of Al-Fasi.

155. THE CODE OF MAIMONIDES

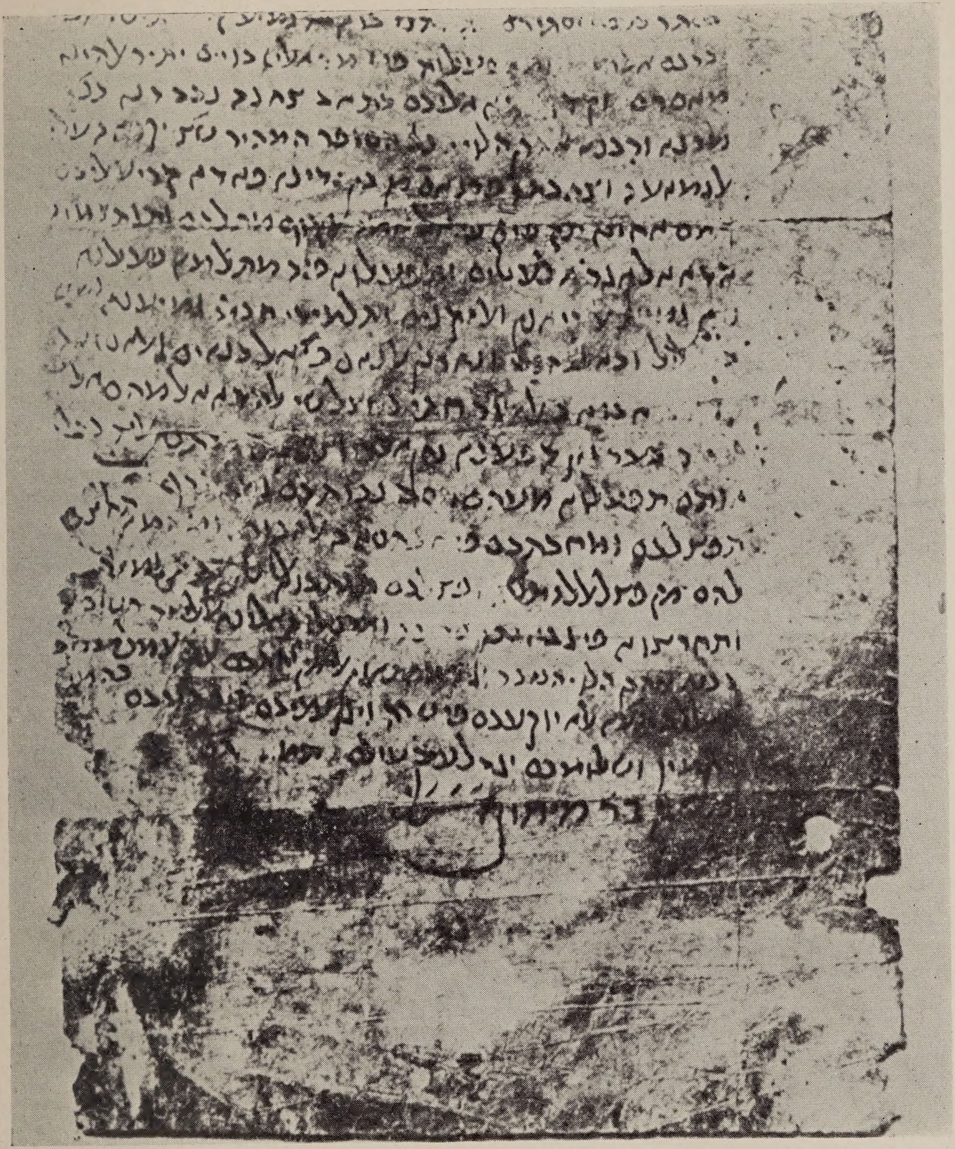
The work of Al-Fasi was accepted by all scholars as a basis for decisions of all religious and legal questions in practical life, but only as a basis, for it merely indicated the way and with all its great value there was a need felt for a more clear-cut and orderly code where the law shall be given briefly and decisively. The few codifiers in Spain in the generation after Al-Fasi did not fulfill the need. The most important of them, Rabbi Judah ben Barzlai-Albarceloni (fl. end of eleventh century), who wrote the Book of the Times (Sepher ha-I'tim), only followed Al-Fasi. The book is a code covering the laws relating to the observance of Sabbath and Holy Days, hence, its name, and is principally a digest of Al-Fasi's *Halakoth* with additions of Gaonic decisions which were overlooked by Al-Fasi. Fragments of it are still extant and were published.

But soon there arose a man whose knowledge was unbounded and skill unsurpassed, and he it was who prepared the complete code of Jewish Law which is both authoritative and scientific. That man was Moses ben Maimon.

Moses ben Maimon was born on Sabbath, the fourteenth of Nisan, 1135, at one o'clock in the afternoon, at the city of Cordova. His father, Maimon, a judge, Dayan, of the community and a great Talmudic scholar, the pupil of Joseph Ibn Migash (Sect. a) was his first teacher. When Moses reached the age of fifteen, his father together with the other Jews were forced to flee from their native city, on account of the persecution of the fanatical Almohades, who then became masters of Cordova, and the Maimon family settled for a time in Almeria. Soon, however, they left that city too, and several years were spent in wandering from city to city. In spite of that, the young Moses kept up his studies which covered Talmud, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. During these wanderings, he made the acquaintance of many scholars among whom were also the son of the astronomer, Ibn Alpha, and another one, a student of the philosopher Avempace. At the age of twenty-three Maimonides turned author, and his first work was a treatise on the calendar (Heshbon ha-Ibur) which was soon followed by one on logic, later translated into Hebrew by Moses Ibn Tibbon under the name of *Miloth ha-Higgayon,* i. e. Terms of Logic. He then turned his attention to the Talmud and wrote commentaries on some tractates and began his famous commentary to the Mishnah discussed above. In 1160, the Maimon family left Spain and settled in Fez, North Africa. Here the same fanatical sect held sway, and Maimon and his family were forced to conceal their adherence to Judaism. But an epistle which Moses wrote to his Morano brethren under the name *Iggereth ha-Shmad,* i. e. epistle concerning conversion, where he encouraged them to remain loyal to Judaism, though officially Mohammedan, aroused the wrath of the authorities, and the Maimons were forced to flee again. In 1165, they set sail for Palestine where they spent some time, and finally settled in Egypt at Fostat where Moses became the court physician. Shortly after that Maimon died, and David, the brother of Moses, was drowned in the Indian Ocean, yet through all these vicissitudes, Moses kept up his literary work, and in 1168, he completed his commentary to the Mishnah and soon began his code. This he completed in 1180 after assiduous work of twelve years. Ten years later, 1190, he finished his Guide of the Perplexed. Maimonides was revered by the entire world Jewry in his lifetime, and his authority was unquestioned even by the greatest scholars of his age. He died in 1204 at the age of sixty-nine.

The Code of Maimonides represents the greatest attempt ever made to arrange the entire mass of what we call the Oral Law, scattered and complex as it is, in a clear, orderly, logically coherent manner. In it, the method of pure codification without reference to the sources reached its highest point and was never surpassed. In reality, it is more than a code, it is in a way a digest of the entire Oral Law contained in the entire Halakic Literature. A code is usually composed for practical purposes and is intended for judges and lawyers, or in case of pure religious law, for all such persons who possess authority to decide questions of such law. The earlier Jewish codifiers had this purpose in view, and have therefore omitted to include in their collections, or compilations, of laws all such groups of laws which ceased to be operative with the destruction of the Temple. Not so Maimonides, he included not only such laws, as that of the sacrifices, or those of clean and unclean, but also laws of ethics, and even principles of theology, for he had a different purpose in mind.

Thus, he says in his introduction, "At this time when the tribulations



A Judeo-Arabic letter bearing the signature of Moses Maimonides, 1135–1204.
(Schechter Collection, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.)

of our people have increased, and wisdom has diminished, all the Responsa, comments, and Halakoth of the Gaonim are becoming difficult to understand to a great part of our people, not to speak of both the Talmudim proper, the Babylonian and the Palestinian, which are very difficult and complex so that only men of broad minds can penetrate their depths and select the decisions. And therefore, I, Moses ben Maimon, the Sephardi of Spain, girded my loins and relying on the help of God devoted myself to all these books and wrote this treatise, where I have given the results of all matters pertaining to what is permitted (Mutor) and what is prohibited (Osur), what is clean (Tohor) and what is unclean (Tome), and all other laws, so that the entire Oral Law shall be clearly ordered for everyone without question and answer, without differences of opinion. Briefly, this treatise purposes to obviate the necessity for any other book, on any matter of Jewish law. In it is collected the entire oral law together with the institutes, customs, and decrees that were made from the time of Moses, our teacher, to the close of the Talmud, and also including the comments of the Gaonim and their decrees. Therefore, I called this treatise Mishnah Torah (The second law to the Torah) for a man should read first the written law, i. e. the Pentateuch, and then he can read this book and he will know the oral law, and he does not need any other Book."

From this is to be seen that he did not write a code for rabbis and judges, but a digest of the entire oral law in his own style and order. To the uninitiated, the stupendity of the work may not be evident, only the one who knows the enormous mass of the entire Halakic literature which runs into the thousands of pages, the nature of that literature where opinions differ and no definite decision is given, where matters relating to a single law are scattered in various tractates, where there are innumberable other difficulties in the way of arriving at a decision, will appreciate the task of Maimonides. He not only had to remember practically the entire literature so that no statement could be hidden from him, but he had to coördinate and piece together various statements from different places which bear on a point. In addition, he had to weigh the opinions of his predecessors, the Gaonim and other scholars, to accept them or refute them, and very often to break a new path in the labyrinth of Talmudic interpretation. As the code lies before us, it flows smoothly like a clear brook, and is easily read and understood, but beneath it lie depths of knowledge and eddies of mental keenness.

Thus far as regards the content of the Mishnah Torah, but the form, namely, the order and arrangement, is likewise a masterly piece of work. In it is displayed all the logical skill and systematizing ability of Maimonides. As a basis for his work, he took, like the author of the *Halakoth Gedoloth* (above Sect. 149), the enumeration of the six hundred and thirteen precepts (Mitzvoth) making some changes in the list of the former. In his grouping of the laws of the Code, he indicates which precepts, whether positive or prohibitive, are included in the group. The grouping itself does not follow the order of the precepts, as they are given in the Pentateuch nor as they are treated in the Talmud, but according to a logical system of his own. He divided the entire sum of Written and Oral Laws into four divisions: (*1*) Those bearing on the relation between God and man. (2) Those concerning the life of the individual in its several phases. (*3*) Those laws the operation of which depends on the possession of Palestine. (*4*) Laws relating to the life of society, namely, civil and criminal law. He divided the code in accordance with this arrangement into fourteen books each containing a number of closely knitted groups of laws. To the first division he devoted two books, (*1*) The *Sepher ha-Madah* (Book of Knowledge) and (2) *Sepher Ahabah* (Book of Love). The first book deals both with the principles of theology, the primary duties of man to God, and ethics. It contains five groups of laws: The fundamentals of the Torah, dealing with such precepts, as the duty to know that there is a God, to love Him, fear Him, consecrate His name, etc., as well as all prohibitory precepts, namely, not to think of any other gods, not to desecrate His name and others. The second group deals with Ethics (Deoth), describing minutely all laws and regulations of human conduct. The third, fourth and fifth groups deal with the laws of the study of the Torah, idolatry, and penitence (Teshuba), respectively. The laws of idolatry are included here, for they refer to the primary transgressions against the Godhead. In the first book are also included the laws of blasphemy and those referring to prohibited practices of idolators, such as sorcery, witchcraft, and others. The second book, designated Love (Ahabah), covers all such laws of the ritual which express the love and admiration of God, such as that of prayer, benedictions, phylacteries, fringes (Tzitzith), circumcision, and others. In all the precepts relating to this group of laws is expressed either the love of Israel for God, or that of God for Israel whom He selected as His people by special covenant, and gave them certain laws as a sign of this covenant.

The second division contains four books, the first of which is called *Zemanim,* Times, dealing with the laws of all Holy Days, both with the Biblical ones, such as Passover, Feast of Weeks, Tabernacles, and the rabbinically instituted ones, as Hanukah and Purim. In this books, there are ten groups of laws. The second book called *Nashim* (women) covers the subject of family law, dealing with laws of marriage and divorce, levirate marriage (Yebum), and some other laws, such as the laws relating to the woman suspected of adultery (Sotah). The book contains five groups of laws. The third is called Holiness (Kedushah) and deals with laws mostly prohibitive, relating to incestuous relations and to prohibited foods. The name of this book is derived from the fact that the passages regarding these laws in the Bible always close with the pronouncement "And ye shall be holy, for I, your God, am holy." And it was always taken to mean, that these prohibitions inculcating that one shall not defile himself, neither by promiscuous sexual relations, nor by unclean food, were given for the purpose to make human life more distinct and more noble, which means sanctification of life. The book contains three groups of laws. The section on prohibited foods is a very extensive one and includes all prohibitions relating to food or drink even when the food is only temporarily forbidden, such as not to eat grain before the tithes are separated and the like. The laws relating to the mode of slaughtering the animals (Shechitah) form a separate section, as they are merely preparatory conditions without which the food can not be eaten. The fourth book is called The Book of Separation (Haflaha) and deals with vows, oaths, laws of Nazirites, and the like, all such laws arising from an oath, a vow, or promise made by a man which places upon him a special obligation. The name is derived from the Biblical expression (Numbers VI, 2) used in regard to the vow of a Nazirite, which intends to separate him from the use of wine.

The third division likewise contains four books, all dealing with laws directly connected with Palestine and Temple worship, which ceased with the destruction of the Temple and the exile. The first *Zeraim* (seeds) covers all laws relating to tithes, first fruit offering (Bikurim), the first born, both of man and animals, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, and the like. The second is named *Abodah* (worship) and describes the order of worship in the Temple, the regulations concerning the holy vessels and ordinances concerning priests, as well as the general laws of fixed types of sacrifices. It contains nine groups of laws.

The third book is called sacrifices (Korbonoth) and deals with special kinds of sacrifices, such as the Paschal Lamb, sacrifices brought, when a sin is committed involuntarily (Shogeg), and others. The fourth book is designated *Taharah* (purity), dealing with all laws of uncleanness, giving a detailed description of the classes of defilement, their prescribed purification and other things.

Four books are also devoted to the fourth division. The first one called *Nezikin* (damages) covers all cases of direct damages and injuries which one man can inflict upon another, including the greatest injury, that of murder. It contains five groups of laws, dealing with general damages, stealing in all its phases whether direct or indirect, such as giving false weight and measures, robbery, assault, and battery, and murder in all its aspects. The second book denominated *Kinyon* (Acquisition of Property) covers the subject in its entirety. It describes all modes of transfer of property, such as buying and selling, giving of gifts, laws concerning buying of slaves as well as their treatment, laws of agency and partnership, and similar matters. The third book named *Mishpatim* (Judgments) deals with general laws affecting commerce, trade, and other similar relations, such as trusts and bailments, loans, relations between employee and employer, and laws of inheritance, its sequence and order. The fourth book, *Shoftim* (Judges) is devoted to procedure, and covers all the laws relating to the establishment of courts, especially the High Court, or the Sanhedrin, its jurisdiction and method of punishment. Under this head come also the kinds of capital punishment formerly practiced by Jewish courts, and all modes of procedure. The book also includes groups of laws concerning evidence, the qualification of witnesses and their examination, laws concerning those who rebel against authority, both against authority of court and authority of the parents. This group deals also with such crimes against parents as striking or cursing them, both of which are punished by death. Finally, the laws of the state are dealt with, namely, those affecting the king and his administration, laws of war and peace, and such public matters arising from administration. To this book there is also appended all such regulations which we may call 'jus gentium," namely, all laws obligatory on the gentiles residing in the Jewish state, who though they do not fall under the Jewish law are yet obliged to observe certain fundamental laws necessary for the welfare of humanity. Technically, these laws are called the Precepts of the Children of Noah (Mitzvoth Bene Noach), namely, laws affecting non-Jews who are not of the descent of Abraham.

At the very end of the book, a few chapters are devoted to the description of the Messianic age and the rule of the Messiah. Maimonides is here, as elsewhere, true to his rationalism, and excludes from his conception of the Messianic rule all mystical and miraculous elements, but pictures his administration as one based on the old state laws of Israel guaranteeing justice to all, and conducive to peace, both of the nation and of the individual. "The prophets and the sages," says Maimonides, "desired the arrival of the Messianic days, not for the purpose that the Jews may rule the world, neither that they have dominion over the gentiles, nor that the latter exalt them, nor in order to eat and drink and enjoy pleasures, but that the Jews shall not be oppressed and shall have leisure to occupy themselves with the study of the Torah and wisdom, so that they may be deserving of the life in the world to come. At that time, i. e. the Messianic, there will be neither hunger nor war, nor jealousy and competition, and the main business of the whole world will be to know God. And therefore, the Israelites will be great in wisdom who will conceive their Creator in the highest degree possible for men as it is written, (Isaiah XI, 9) 'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.' " These words are undoubtedly a fitting ending to this great code which began with the Book of Knowledge.

On account of the division of the Code of Maimonides into fourteen books, it received a second name beside that of Mishnah Torah, namely, *Yod ha-Hasakah* (The Mighty Hand, as Yod and daleth in Hebrew signify numerically fourteen, Yod—10, daleth—4).

The order of the Code is as we have seen based on a very logical scheme, and on the whole, the various groups of laws follow in connected sequence. There are, however, some deficiencies in the arrangement, and at times a forced grouping. But these are not due to Maimonides' lack of system, but to the nature of Jewish law. Jewish law does not draw any distinction between a religious sin and social crime. All laws emanate from one source—God, and the one who worships idols in the presence of witnesses and after being warned by them is punished by death, as one who commits murder, and there are quite a number of pure religious sins punishable by death. No grouping could, therefore, be logically carried out, the respective laws, the transgressions of which requires capital punishment, had to be scattered according to the general classes where they belong, and could not be subsumed under one aspect of criminal law. Some laws could not be classified at all and had to be forcibly connected to some groups, thus, the laws of mourning are included by Maimonides in the division of civil and criminal laws. The reason for it is that nowhere in the Bible are there given any laws regarding mourning, but there is a precept that those executed by court should be interred on the day of their execution, hence Maimonides joined the laws of mourning, which are conceptually connected with interment, to the laws dealing with the execution of criminals by court. Maimonides was very careful of his logical arrangement and whenever an apparent interruption of the order occurred, he stated his reason for the forced grouping.

Strict logical sequence is followed in the statement of the laws proper in the treatment of the subject. Each group of laws dealing with a subject is carefully analyzed into its component parts, the criterion for this analysis is the concept of the precept under which the part can be subsumed, for as a rule, each group contains a number of Biblical precepts whether positive or negative (i. e. prohibitory). If a group of laws contains four or five precepts the group then contains four or five parts, and the order of Halakic statements follows the order of the list of precepts given at the head of the section. The most general and fundamental laws are usually stated first, the particular and detailed later. Expressly Biblical laws precede those deduced by Talmudic method of interpretation, rabbinical laws, institutes, and decrees come last. The Code, as a whole, shows the stamp of a master mind, who planned out every detail with skill and in accordance with a well-defined logical system.

Formally, the Code is modeled after the Mishnah, each book is divided into groups of Halakoths, each group into chapters, and each chapter into statements of single Halakoth.

The style of the Mishnah Torah also deserves special attention. It is in itself a classic creation, and a contribution to the development of the Hebrew language during the Middle Ages. Rabbi Moses, himself, says in his preface to the Book of Precepts concerning the style of the Code, "I have chosen not to compose it (i. e. the Code) in the style of the prophetical books, for that language is not sufficient to express all the details of the laws, nor will I use the style and language of the Talmud, for only few will understand it on account of its construction and difficult words, but I will adopt the style and the language of the Mishnah so that the majority of our people may understand it." But in reality, the style of the Mishnah Torah is only modeled after that of the Mishnah and is not the same style. It is distinguished by its harmony, both that of syntax and that of diction. On the whole, it is pure Hebrew with a slight admixture of Aramaic words. Maimonides exploited the Hebrew language to its fullest extent, and used a much larger number of Biblical words than the Mishnah uses. Besides, he also used a large number of Biblical phrases in order to beautify the style, and thus the dry language of a Code is softened and adorned. In addition, Maimonides uses a number of Mishnaic words in new meanings and at times even new and different forms of Mishnaic verbs. He also coined new verbal forms and new words to express new meanings or shades of meanings. All these changes gave the style both elasticity and preciseness, richness, and even a kind of beauty. His Code is, therefore, a great work not only from the point of view of the content but also from that of form and style, and its influence on Hebrew literature is inestimable.

The Code of Maimonides aroused great admiration and was widely circulated and accepted in all parts of Jewry. Later, it became a subject of commentaries. Many great scholars wrote lengthy commentaries not so much to explain the text, for this needed no explanation as it is very clear, but to explain the reasons which guided Maimonides in his decisions, and also to supply the sources whence he derived his Halakoth.

On the other hand, it also aroused some opposition. Some well-meaning scholars saw a great danger in his attempt. They feared that his Code which is a digest of the entire Oral Law will supplant the study of the Talmud and thus bring about a standstill in the study of the Law. Their fears were not entirely unjustified for in some places of the East, such as in South Arabia where the Code of Maimonides was considered as the last word in Oral Law, Talmudic study dwindled to a minimum. They, therefore, opposed the complete acceptance of the Code as the final authority on all matters of legal and religious decisions and urged the continued study of the sources. The greatest of these opponents was Abraham ben David of Posquiers (see Sect. 147) who immediately upon the appearance of the Code wrote refutations to some of the decisions, quoting different customs, and pointing out errors. These refutations were appended to the Code and were later printed together with it. Yet, the opposition did not weaken the respect for the Code. It took its respective place in the Halakic literature and became the great model and basis for later codes. Nor on the other hand, did the Code in most Jewries diminish the study of the Talmud. Halakah was still the great subject of study in all European Jewries and its literature kept on growing and even codifying in various ways continued to the greatest extent.

156. THE FRANCO-GERMAN SCHOOL OF CODIFIERS

As stated, the appearance of the Code of Maimonides did not affect the codifying activities in other countries. The Franco-German scholars kept up their intensive study of the Talmud and Law, and as a result, there was always something new in the field. Besides, customs as well as opinions differed and not all the decisions of Maimonides were accepted, so that there was ample room for new whole or partial codes. Simultaneous with the appearance of the Code of Maimonides, we have several partial codes which appeared in the Provence. The opponent of Maimonides, Abraham Ibn Daud, wrote partial codes on the law of family purity, under the name of *Baal ha-Nefesh* (Master of the Soul), also on food laws, i. e. on prohibited kinds of food, and on certain ritual and holiday laws. These sections are parts of his larger work, *Temim Deim* (i. e. Perfect Knowledge).

His opponent, Zerachia Halevi (see above Sect. 146), has likewise written some partial codes on the laws of slaughtering and terepha, also on family purity. A partial code of greater importance was the one written by Isaac ben Abba Mari of Marseilles (b. 1122—died about 1200) under the name of *Ittur Sephorim,* i. e. the Crowning of the Scholars. The code deals primarily with civil law, especially devoted to the question of documents, and also with laws of marriage and divorce. There are appended to it several sections dealing with food laws. It follows the source method, quoting the Talmudic passages on each subject or subdivision and then giving the Gaonic decisions as well as that of Isaac Al-Fasi wherever necessary, and finally drawing his own conclusions. The arrangement of the subjects is a very peculiar one. They are arranged in accordance with the letters of a certain phrase which reads in Hebrew *Tashkeph B'geza Hokmah,* i. e. Look at the Trunk of Wisdom, and each subject comes under a letter of the three words, namely, subjects beginning with Tau are treated first, with Shin next and so on.

The Tosafist school in France and Germany produced many codifiers. The first of this school was Eliezer ben Nathan (b. 1080—d. 1165), one of the older Tosafists. His book, *Eben ha-Ezer* (Rock of Salvation), is a kind of compendium of the important three orders of the Talmud, Moed, Nashim, Nezikin, containing the laws practiced after the destruction of the Temple. It contains, besides comments on the Talmud proper, the gist of the legal decisions, together with a number of customs and opinions of the older Franco-German scholars.

A more important code, though not a complete one, is the book *ha-Terumah* (The Selection) by Rabbi Baruch ben Isaac, a pupil of Isaac ben Samuel, leading Tosafist. The book is so named for it is a selected offering of the best of scholarship of his generation, especially of the teachings of his great master. It deals with all laws concerning food, such as slaughtering, terepha and other such matters; laws of the Sabbath, marriage, and divorce, family purity, and ritual. In fact, it covers with certain omissions almost the entire field of religious law, including even family relations, but does not touch upon civil law. The method is more of a code than a source method, as it gives a quite accurate description of the practical laws, though the sources are copiously quoted and commented upon. To make his book still more practical and pure code-like, the author has prefaced it with a detailed digest of all decisions contained in the book.

Of the school of Rashi, we have a number of partial codes, the most important of which are the *Mahsor Vitri,* and the *ha-Pardes* (The Garden). The first was compiled at the beginning of the twelfth century by a pupil of Rashi, Rabbi Simcha of Vitry. Its name is derived from the fact that it was primarily devoted to the cycle of religious laws which embrace the life of the Jew daily throughout the year, especially those that relate to the liturgy and synagogue service. It also contains a complete text of the prayers for the entire year plus the selections of sacred poetry (Piutim). This fact is another reason for its name, for the name Mahsor was given to such liturgical compilations, but in reality it contains more than that, as it includes all laws which are incumbent upon a pious Jew to perform. It is found in two versions, a shorter one, which is probably the original one, and a larger one which includes many additions, and a number of large extracts of laws from other codes, especially that of the *ha-Terumah.* In its larger recension, it is an exceptionally valuable book, for it is encyclopedic in character. It contains a valuable collection of Piutim from various poets for Sabbaths and holidays, which are not found anywhere else, a treatise on the calendar with directions how to make a calendar, large extracts of certain Midrashic books lost at present, and numerous Gaonic Responsa, an excellent commentary on Aboth, the ethical tractate of the Mishnah, and texts of other smaller tractates, and many more things which are not found anywhere else.

Its order is as follows: It begins first with the order of the week day, giving briefly the laws and regulations concerning the prayers and benedictions obligatory upon a Jew every day, and then the text of the prayers is given together with explanations for various customs and order of prayers, their origin and source. This is followed by the Sabbath in the same manner, first the description of all customs, order of worship, and then the texts of the prayers and poems for every service, as well as the songs recited at the table (Zemiroth). Then the Holidays are treated in the same manner until the entire year is completed. To make the Mahsor a real manual of religious laws to be a guide for every Jew in the performance of his duties, selections of Rashi's decisions on other subjects besides liturgy and prayers are given, such as the laws and regulations concerning marriage, especially the ceremonial part, concerning circumcision, family purity (i. e. concerning a menstruating woman and others). There are also short digests of general laws of the Sabbath, of Passover, of phylacteries (tephilim), of writing the Scroll of the Law, and even of animal slaughtering and food laws, excerpted from the code *ha-Terumah*. The Mahsor is, as stated, a great contribution to Paitainic literature and has been used as a source book by all scholars writing on history of liturgy and sacred poetry. Finally, it is also valuable as a source for folk customs during the Middle Ages, as its encyclopedic character affords us a glimpse into Jewish daily life during that period.

The second book, The *ha-Pardes,* i. e. the Garden, was compiled by another pupil of Rashi, Shemayah, about the same time. It is more in the nature of a code and is closely related to Rashi, as it contains to a large extent his decisions. It deals likewise with the entire field of religious law with only a few remarks on certain phases of civil law. Its order is not very systematic, each subject is dealt with separately, but the arrangement of the subjects is at random. This book, like the Mahsor, contains to a certain extent selections from Gaonic Responsa and other codes, and also some texts of Midrashic treatises, and that of the Palestinian Talmud to tractate Berakoth. The inclusion of such matters in a code can only be explained by the fact that copies of such texts were rare, and the author who possessed them thought it worth while to preserve them for future generations.

We have several more codes which were produced by the Tosafist school, two of which are important. The first one is the *Sepher Yereim* (The Book of the Pious) by Rabbi Eliezer of Metz. Rabbi Eliezer was a disciple of Rabbi Jacob Tam and was one of the leading Tosafists of the second generation. His book shows the influence of the Maimonidean Code, inasmuch as it is an attempt to give a complete code of the entire

Oral Law. He also adopted, like Maimonides, the number of precepts as the basis of the arrangement of the material, and it contains four hundred sixty-four sections which include, according to him, all the six hundred thirteen precepts, as he at times included two or more precepts in one section. The number, however, is not complete, as several subjects of civil law are missing.

He adopted, however, an original scheme in the division of his book. He divided his book into seven parts which he calls pillars (Amudim) and each part into subdivisions. Each main division and subdivision contains the practical legal interpretations of a number of precepts, both affirmative (Ase) and prohibitive (Lo-taase). The precepts themselves, he classified according to their content. Thus, he has six parts—the first one is missing: (*a*) All laws relating to prohibited foods, prohibitions of all kinds whether they still operate or have ceased to operate on account of the destruction of the Temple. (*b*) Those laws relating to things which even the use or any enjoyment of is prohibited, e. g. idols and their appurtenances, etc. (*c*) Laws the infringement or performance of which involves a monetary consideration, such as civil laws and others. (*d*) All laws, the infringement or non-performance of which involves both disobedience of God's command and harmful results to man such as criminal laws and the like. The last two classes concern only pure religious laws and include (*e*) Religious laws depending merely on speech which involve only a disobedience of God if not performed or infringed upon, such as blasphemy on the one hand, or not praying on the other. (*f*) Religious laws of the same class which relate to an action. The first part most likely related to the principles of religion and ethics.

His method is more code-like, but sources are quoted verbatim, and to a great extent earlier codes are utilized and quoted by name, and short discussions of the authenticity of their decisions are given.

The second one is the Rekach[10] (a spice compound) by Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (b. 1160—d. 1238). The book was most likely intended to be a complete code, but only a part of it remained. It contains four hundred ninety-seven sections, and deals with the entire set of religious laws, such as the laws of the Sabbath and all the holidays, the ritual in all its details, laws observed in the home, such as mourning, marriage ceremony, slaughtering and prohibited foods, and all such practical religious laws. The book, however, opens like the Code of Maimonides with a number of chapters on the principles and ideals of the Jewish religion such as the love of God, unity of God, duty of piety and penitence. Over all these chapters, there rests the spirit of sincere, deep, and Mediæval piety. These principles are not discussed from their theoretical side but from the practical one. In his chapter on penitence, he does not emphasize the psychological side as Maimonides does, but the practical side, and he actually prescribes certain kinds of penances and self-torture for various sins.

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[10] The name of the book was chosen by the author because the numerical value of the three Hebrew letters Resh, Kuf, and Heth equals 308, the same value of the letters of Eleazar, his own name.

The method is pure code method, giving the decisions without quoting the sources, only here and there sources are referred to. He also includes customs to which he devotes special sections, indicating their nature. In these customs we already note the influence of the Kabbala or mystic teaching upon practical religious life, as many of them can not be explained except from the point of view of that teaching.

The arrangement of subjects seems to be an arbitrary one, though the yearly cycle of festivals seems to be the central point in the work.

C. Responsa

157. CHARACTER OF RESPONSA LITERATURE

It was already observed in previous sections that both the commentaries and the codes had their origin in the Responsa of the Gaonim. Yet, it would be incorrect to speak of the large number of complete and incomplete collections of Responsa which we possess, both from the Gaonim and from the generations of succeeding scholars, merely as disjointed commentaries or dissected parts of codes. It is true that many of the earlier Responsa can be freely considered as the raw material, for both the later commentaries and codes, yet this great extensive literature of the Responsa which kept on growing for a period of fifteen hundred years has a soul and character of its own. Its prime quality is its constant touch with changing life. No legal system and still less a way of life as Judaism is, can be encompassed in a code. A code is a fixed and stationary thing, life is flowing and changing, and new cases are constantly coming up which have to be decided by interpretation, analogy, and other logical rules of deduction. Roman law has its set of Responsa, modern legal systems, especially the American one, has its constantly growing sets of decisions and cases, and Judaism its Responsa.

The Responsa were not written hypothetically or fictitiously but as their name indicates were actual replies of authoritative persons to queries addressed to them. As such, they reflect Jewish life in all its various phases, both the inner and the external life. In them, we hear the echo of Jewish suffering, as well as the rejoicing at redemption from threatening disasters. In the many volumes of Responsa, we can trace the political, social, economic and industrial conditions of the Jews in various lands and ages. There we can follow the origin and development of customs, forms of conduct, methods of education, and many more expressions of life during the centuries. This literature, therefore, is a most valuable source for Jewish history and serves as a depository of first documents. But Judaism, as stated, is not merely a set of practical injunctions, but also comprises thoughts, ideas, feelings, and sentiments, hence the Responsa reflect also all these and serve as an index of the thoughts, ideas, and sentiments of the people, inasmuch as many of them were written as answers to queries upon matters of ethics, theology, religious philosophy, and even history and chronology.

As the Responsa were written singly and only collected later, very seldom by the writer himself, but by disciples of the writers, or by students of literature centuries later, it could hardly be expected that they should have been arranged systematically. Most of these collections are put together without any plan or division of the subject-matter. Exceptions, of course, abound. The only guiding line is often the numeration of the Responsa. In reality, however, this should not surprise us. Taking into consideration the exceedingly difficult conditions under which Jewish literature was produced, the extent of the Jewish Diaspora, the persecutions, and the exiles which the Jew underwent, the lack of libraries and other facilities, the imperfect state of manuscript copying and preserving, we are rather surprised how these Responsa could have been preserved at all. It is only the excessive zeal and deep love of a people for knowledge which enabled the accomplishment of that feat, to preserve such a mass of literature consisting of single decisions and comments, and extending over a period of fifteen hundred years, even if not in an entirely perfect state.

The Responsa literature is conveniently divided into five periods which begin with the end of the seventh century, and run into the nineteenth century. For the present we will cast a glance over the first two periods, namely, the Gaonic and the one following it.

158. THE GAONIC RESPONSA

The Gaonic Responsa begin, as stated, at the end of the seventh century about fifty years after the establishment of the Gaonate. The first Gaon from whom we have a few Responsa was Rab Shishna, Gaon of Sura, who lived at that period. From that time on until the close of the Gaonate in 1038, we have an unbroken line of successive layers of Responsa in which almost all Gaonim participated. These Responsa were the cords which bound the scattered Jewries of the Diaspora to the great spiritual intellectual center at Babylonia, the nerves through which the spiritual influence was carried to distant parts of the world.

The Responsa were not as a rule preserved by the Gaonim themselves as to them it was merely the discharging of a daily function. Fortunately for us, the inquirers, however, did preserve copies of the answers, as to them these answers contained rules of action and information on important matters, and served as texts which could be consulted on future occasions. That a great part of these Responsa was lost is evident, but the part that was preserved, both in separate collections and in innumerable books by later authors, if it could be collected in one edition would fill many volumes.

Of the separate collections of Gaonic Responsa, we have about twelve, some of these were already published several centuries ago, and most of them only during the nineteenth century by various scholars from manuscripts which came to light. The most important are: (*1*) *Gaonic decisions* (Halakoth P'sukoth) published in Constantinople in 1516 and republished in 1893 by Joel Miller with explanatory notes. This collection contains one hundred ninety-five briefly written decisions given by various Gaonim to inquirers concerning all matters of religious laws. (2) *Inquiries and Responsa of the Gaonim* (Sheoloth Ui-teshuboth M'ha Gaonim) published first at Constantinople in 1575, which contains three hundred fifty Responsa from Gaonim on all matters of Jewish law, religious and civil, as well as comments and explanation of Talmudic passages. In this collection, most of the Responsa are anonymous nor are the names of the inquirers given. (*3*) *The Portals of Justice* (Shaarē Zedek) published at Saloniki in 1792 contains four hundred thirty-three Responsa mostly signed. This collection originally contained four parts but the first two were lost. Of the last part, the third is devoted to matters of pure religious law and the fourth to civil law. This collection is the best arranged as the Responsa are grouped according to the subject-matter they deal with. (4) *The Portals of Responsa* (Shaarē Teshubah)[11] published in Saloniki in 1802 contains three hundred fifty-two Responsa without any particular arangement, which deal mostly with religious laws. (5) *Responsa of early Gaonim* published by David Cassel in 1848 with an introduction by Solomon Rapport. This collection contains one hundred fifty-two Responsa and comments, and is really a second collection of original smaller collections consisting of various groups of Responsa or comments on certain tractates written by individual Gaonim. (6) *Gaonic Responsa* published by Abraham Harkavy from a manuscript in St. Petersburg in 1887. This seems to be the most authentic collection as the Responsa are given in the original form in which they were issued from the hands of the Gaonim, and many of them are written in Arabic.

The other six collections resemble these six. On the whole, all collections as they were made by copyists centuries later contain many repetitions and variants. Sometimes individual Responsa are repeated five or six times. Each of these collections, not excepting that of Harkavy, contains Responsa from later scholars who succeeded the Gaonim, especially from the first Spanish and Franco-German scholars. In most of the collections, the Responsa are abbreviated, longer ones divided up and otherwise changed from the original form.

Besides these collections, there are hundreds and perhaps thousands of the Responsa of the Gaonim quoted in the codes and other books of the scholars of later ages, especially of those who lived in the first four centuries after the close of the Gaonic period. In addition, the bringing to light of the hordes of Jewish manuscripts in the Genizah of Cairo and other cities of the East has added hundreds of single Responsa of the Gaonim, so that the total number will reach many thousands.

With all the imperfections which the fragmentary nature of these collections represents, the value of these Responsa is inestimable not only from the legal point of view but from many sides. They reveal to us the state of the minds of the inquirers in many parts of the world, their perplexities and doubts on many subjects. As the inquirers were not only individuals, but frequently whole communities, we can see at a glance the inner and external life of the communities. The legal side reveals commercial and industrial relations. These inquiries were written at a time when the Talmud was not as yet spread, when customs in ritual and other ways were not yet established, when questions of religious principles were agitating people's minds, in short, when all that we call today the mass of Jewish tradition was not as yet solidified, but was still somewhat flexible. They, therefore, reflect a free spirit of inquiry, a desire to know the origins of things and the reasons why certain things are to be performed. The legal side is well represented, but there are hundreds of inquiries dealing with passages in Mishnah and Talmud, how they are to be read and explained, hundreds dealing with strange and curious Agadic passages, asking for their interpretation. Others ask for guidance in religious conceptions, still others for the reason of certain customs, in ritual or life, others again inquire concerning the origin of the Mishnah or Talmud and other historical questions. The Responsa, therefore, present a kaleidoscopic aspect where all students, of law, of history, of theology, of literature, and all other phases of Jewish life can find interest.

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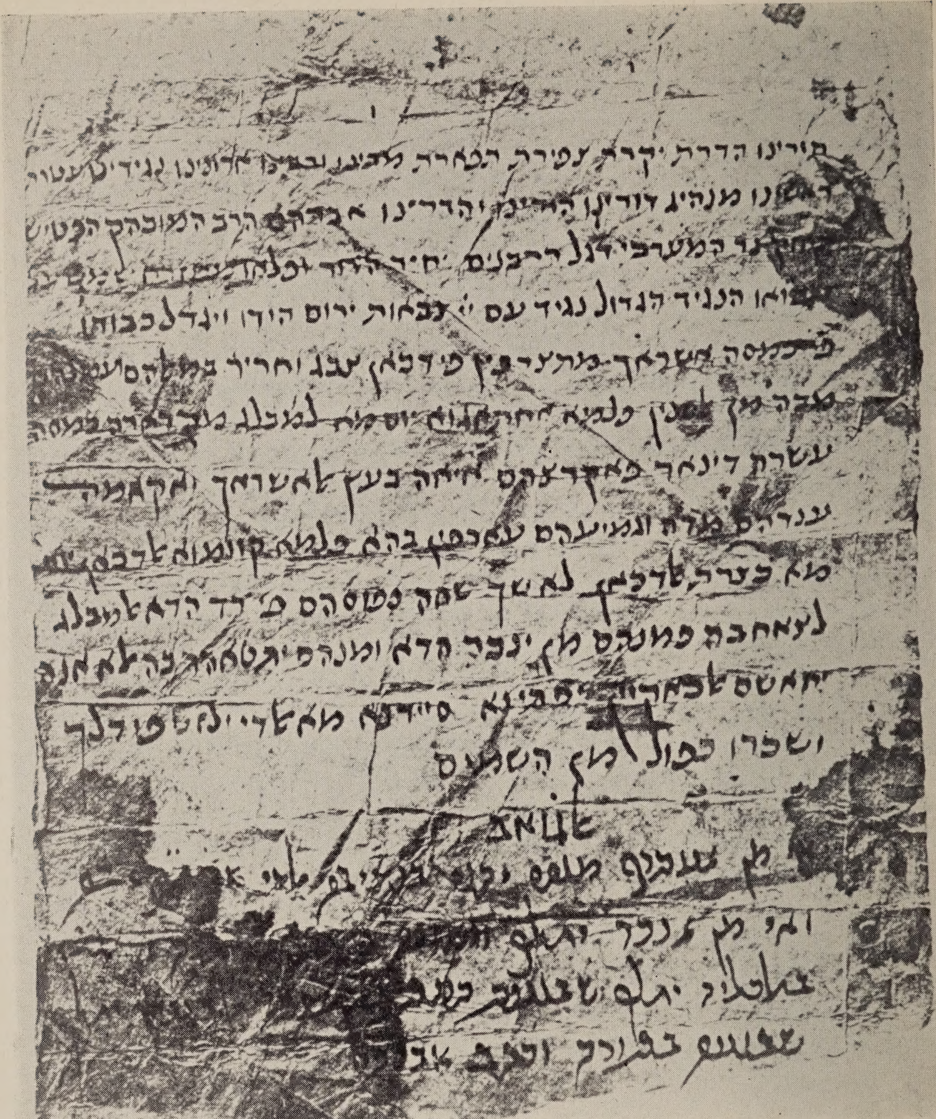
[11] In this name there is a play on the word Tesubah which means both repentance and response. The phrase "Portals of Repentance" occurs frequently in Agadic literature.

As the Responsa bear an individual character, namely, each Gaon answered the inquirer according to what he believed to be true, it is no wonder then that contradictions are frequently found in them and a decision of one Gaon on a certain legal matter, or other subject, is at times overthrown by another Gaon. They could, therefore, not be taken even collectively as a code. Later scholars in citing them have often reserved their opinion on a certain decision and changed it, if they found sufficient reason or authority for doing so. In general, where there is no difference of opinion between the Gaonim themselves, the decision of a Gaon was considered authoritative. It was thus that the Responsa supplied the bases of many sections and parts in later codes. The Responsa are, as a rule, motivated, namely, reasons are given for the decisions or opinion, and sources are quoted and interpreted. These motivations are important not only for the outcome of the decision, but for the understanding of the Talmud, as the passages referred to are explained and interpreted. There are, however, many unmotivated Responsa. On the whole, the Gaonic responsa are brief and distinguished by a simple clearness, far from the later dialectic spirit.

159. RESPONSA LITERATURE IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES

The Responsa of the second period bear both a more orderly and more individual character. The period which is the flourishing epoch of Jewish literature in many fields is distinguished by the individuality



An inquiry in Judeo-Arabic, addressed to Moses b. Maimon, and his autograph Responsum, written about 1180. (Adler Collection, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.)

of the producers of literature. Each author attached his name to his works and endeavored to preserve his writing in their integrity. The Responsa of the great Talmudic scholars are no exception on the whole, though the nature of such work requires that there should likewise be found a number of single and isolated Responsa. We possess, therefore, many collections containing Responsa of various scholars. This is especially true of the Responsa of the early part of that period. The scholars then still conducted themselves in the manner of the Gaonim and decided the questions propounded by the inquirers and troubled themselves little about their collections. Their Responsa were, therefore, included by later collectors among the Gaonic responsa, but the aspect changed soon.

Turning to North Africa and Spain, we notice that almost every noted scholar has written Responsa, but that those of the earlier ones were not collected and are found scattered in later books, while we possess whole collections of Responsa from the later ones. Thus, we have a number of single Responsa of Rab Hanannel and Rab Nisim of Kairwan quoted by later authors. Likewise, there are included, in Gaonic and other collections, Responsa from Rabbi Moses (c. 960), one of the four captives, his son Rabbi Chanoch, Samuel Ibn Nagrela, Isaac Ibn Giat, and other scholars of that generation.

On the other hand, there exist quite large Responsa books from Isaac Al-Fasi and his pupil, Joseph Ibn Migash, and a later collection of such from Moses ben Maimon and others. That of the former is named Responsa of our Master, Isaac Al-Fasi (Sheoloth U-Teshuboth L'Morona Itzchak Alfasi). It contains three hundred twenty Responsa on various subjects. Many of them were written in Arabic and were later translated into Hebrew by Abraham Halevi. Likewise, there is a large collection of Responsa by Joseph Ibn Migash who followed Al-Fasi and also wrote many, especially of a practical import, in Arabic. In addition, many more Responsa of both these scholars are found in collections of later authors. Of the Responsa of Maimonides, we possess a large collection which was published, under the title of "A Collection of the Responsa of the Rambam" (Kovetz Teshuboth ha-Rambam), at Leipzig in 1859. Besides, we also possess a long responsum written in Arabic to the Jews of South Arabia in regard to the question of the Messiah under the title Iggereth Teman (A Letter to Yemen). Most of his other Responsa were written in Arabic and only later translated into Hebrew. They are, on the whole, very brief and concise, and bear the character of decisions.

The sphere of inquiries is still a wide one and is not narrowed down to mere legal cases. The inquirers, though to a lesser extent than in Gaonic times, ask for explanations of difficult Talmudic passages, meaning of curious Agadic statements, and even touch on theology and philosophy. The spirit prevailing in the Responsa is a liberal and free one. Not only Maimonides who was a philosopher, but also Al-Fasi and Ibn Migash endeavor in their answers to rationalize many of the difficult Agadic statements, and introduce a spirit of research based on sound reason.

There is also a large number of Responsa both scattered and in collections by the Franco-German scholars, including those of the Provence. We meet here with the same phenomenon as in the African and Spanish schools. The earlier scholars did not collect their Responsa, and they are therefore scattered in collections by later scholars who quote them extensively. Thus we have Responsa by Rabbi Kalonymos (10th century), his son, Rabbi Meshullam (11th century), which are included in the collections of Gaonic Responsa. Likewise, Responsa of Rabbi Gershon ben Judah, the Light of the Exile (see above Sect. 138), are preserved by later authors in large numbers. Rashi's Responsa, which are quite numerous, were not collected by his pupils in one book, but were included in the several code books bearing the name of Rashi and which were compiled by his pupils, especially the *Pardes* (see above Sect. 154). It is only when we come to the twelfth century that definite collections of Responsa begin to appear. Rabbi Jacob Tam (see Sect. 143) has devoted a large part of his book, *Sepher ha-Yoshar,* containing glosses (Tosofoth) and decisions, also to Responsa. Likewise, Eliezer ben Nathan collected his Responsa in his book *Eben ha-Ezer* (Rock of Salvation), the other parts of which are a code. There are also Responsa of the Provence scholars, Abraham Ab Beth Din (Dean of the Court, 12th century) and Abraham Ibn David of Posquiers, collected in a book named *Tmim Deim* (Perfect of Knowledge). This book compiled by the latter contains besides his own Responsa and that of the former, his father-in-law, also Responsa of many others.

The Responsa of the Franco-German schools are more limited in their extent. They deal almost exclusively with legal cases, and only here and there, inquiries of a different nature occur. On the whole, they are more lengthy, and are rather in the nature of dialectic discussions than brief decisions. The decision is usually reached only after a long criticism of the opinions of previous authorities, and very often a reinterpretation of the sources. In this criticism and reinterpretation, great mental agility and logical acumen are displayed, and the Responsa thus constitute not only a contribution to legal decisions, but to the understanding of the Talmud. The inquiries reflect not only the inner religious life of the West-European Jewries but also their sufferings and tribulations. We hear there the echo of the persecutions of the Crusade, the relations of the Jews to the Church, nobles and other potentates of the Mediæval World. We meet with inquiries concerning the ransoming of captives, paying of fines by communities and distribution of taxes and all such matters arising from the peculiar political position of the Jews. In brief, the Jewish world is reflected there.

D. METHODOLOGY

160. BOOKS ON METHODOLOGY OF THE TALMUD

In addition to all these various phases of Halakic activity, there is still one more phase to be considered, which in spite of its rather meager quantity is of literary importance, and that is the small number of books dealing with the methodology of the Talmud. The Talmud, in the form in which it has been transmitted to us, verily justifies the epithet often applied to it, "The Sea of the Talmud," for like the sea it represents an uncharted expanse, and the one who undertakes to navigate it must have some guiding lines, a set of rules by means of which he can find his way, especially if he wants to arrive at some definite practical decisions. Such rules undoubtedly were in vogue at the Babylonian Academies with the early teachers, such as the Saburaim (see Sect. 148) and first generations of the Gaonim. At first, they were like the commentaries taught orally, but as time went on, a need for being written down grew, and it was at last fulfilled.

The earliest book on Methodology is the *Seder Tannaim V'Amoraim* (The order of Tannaim and Amoraim) hailing from Gaonic times. It was variously ascribed to Rab Nachshon Gaon (c. 888) and to Rab Zemach ben Paltoi Gaon (term of office 864–873), but it seems that the author was not a Gaon at all, only one of the leading scholars of the Academy at that time. The time of composition given by the author himself is the year 884. The book serves two purposes, historical and methodological. The author gives at first a list of the important Tannaim and Amoraim, classifying them in generations together with the necessary dates, and then he devotes himself to the methodological part.

He first explains very briefly certain terms of the Mishnah, gives rules for determining the decisive value of the opinions of the important Tannaim, namely, whose opinions are authoritative and determine the relation between the Mishnah and the Bariatha as well as other Halakic books such as the Tannaitic Midrashim. He then takes up the Gemarah, defines its terms, and gives a set of rules for deriving decisions from its discussion. The work, though a small one, is of great value in understanding the Talmud and its method, and it was utilized to its fullest extent by later writers on the subject.

The great Saadia, whose love for system in all phases of Jewish study is well know to us, is said to have paid attention also to this field and is reported to have written a *Seder Tannaim V'Amoraim,* of his own, but nothing is known of the content of that book. The next book on that subject is from the pen of another scientific Talmudic scholar, Samuel Ibn Nagrela, the Nagid. It is called an Introduction to the Talmud (Mebo ha-Talmud). It is entirely devoted to Methodology, and is systematically arranged. He at first defines the terms, Mishnah, Tosefta, Bariatha, Gemarah; then, the terms used by the Gemarah, for both purposes of discussion and decision of Halakah; finally he devotes a brief chapter to rules of decision between opinions of Tannaim and some of the important Amoraim. The introduction of Maimonides to his commentary of the Mishnah contains many valuable remarks on the methodology of the Talmud, though it is primarily historical, as he gives a full list of all the Tannaim mentioned in the Mishnah and other Tannaitic books and classifies them in generations. It is reported though that the introduction contained originally a few more chapters dealing with rules of the Talmud and definition of its terms, but though the report emanates from such an authority as Hayim David Asulai, the eminent Hebrew bibliographer who claims to have seen them himself, yet, we can not be certain about these chapters as they were never published.

A more systematic and more extensive introduction to the Talmud was written by Rabbi Joseph ben Judah Ibn Aknin of North Africa. It seems that in spite of likeness of names and places of residence, this Ibn Aknin is not the favorite pupil of Maimonides, but another scholar of the same period. The book was written about the end of the twelfth century and contains twelve short chapters systematically arranged. The first chapter gives all the various epithets by which a number of scholars, both Tannaim and Amoraim, are quoted in Talmud, besides under their own names. The second, points out who of the Tannaim are meant by the Mishnah, when their names without their patronymics are given, as there were usually several who bore the same name. Chapters III–IX are devoted to rules of decision in general, and decisions between opinions in particular, both the opinions of the Tannaim and those of the Amoraim. The ninth chapter gives an alphabetical list of Tannaim. The tenth and eleventh chapters tabulate the successive generations of Tannaim and Amoraim. The twelfth chapter closes with a discussion about the differences between the schools of Shammai and Hillel. The influence of Maimonides is evident in this book, but its comparative extensive treatment of certain parts of the methods and terms of the Talmud imparts to it considerable value.

Chapter XI

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

161. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

All philosophy starts in doubt. And what is true of the origin of philosophy in general, is especially true of the rise of religious philosophy in particular. But while general philosophic thought is frequently a production of the mind of the individual and its rise can therefore be attributed to doubts of the intellect of an individual, religious philosophy which is, as a rule, a mental phenomenon of the group, inevitably rises through contact of group cultures and exchange of ideas.

In times of national seclusion, when tradition and ancient customs hold sway, there is hardly any need for a philosophy. The religion as such is the philosophy of the group. It is only when the nation or the group emerges from its seclusion and comes in contact with other nations and the respective cultures meet, that the religious ideas of one group begin to be tested, analyzed and explained in the light of the ideas of the other group. First, as a result of the testing and analysis, doubts as to the exact meaning of the religious principles arise, and secondly, there arises on the part of the adherents of the attacked religion a desire for defending it, for reinterpreting its principles in the light of the stronger or prevailing culture, and very often to prove its identity with the most elevated principles of that culture, and thus a philosophy arises.

It was thus with Judaism when it first came in contact with Hellenic culture in the Diaspora, especially in Egypt, that a religious philosophy was born, the greatest representative of which was Philo (see Ch. V). With the disappearance of that Diaspora, its philosophy fell likewise into desuetude, and the very name of the great Philo was almost forgotten from Jewish literature.

Yet, its ideas were not entirely obliterated and the need for a religious philosophy did not cease altogether. Even hedged in and secluded as the Jews were in the first six centuries after the dispersion by the Halakah and the Agada, ideas from the outside did penetrate into the Jewish world, and there was a necessity to counteract their influence. This was undertaken by the very Agada, where many philosophic ideas of the Alexandrian school (Ch. V) are taken up and new ones developed. But in the Agada, things are not arranged systematically and they become mixed up with a multitude of other matters. The need for a systematic Jewish philosophy arose with great vigor in the early Middle Ages, when once more the Jew met a strong and vigorous culture with which he had to contend—this was the culture of the young Arabic nation.

The Arabic culture, as we have seen, influenced Jewish life and literature in many ways. It gave rise to Hebrew poetry, to philological study of the Hebrew language. But still greater was its influence on the development of Jewish thought. In fact, it can almost be said that Jewish philosophy was a child of the current Arabic philosophy. Yet, that should not be taken to mean that the successive development of Jewish thought was a simple imitation. It only signifies that the needs and the conditions which called forth the process of philosophizing in the Jewish world were not only similar to those of the Arabic world, but were impelled by the thought movement in the larger sphere within which the Jewish world moved.

The seventh and eighth centuries were centuries of great intellectual fermentation in the East. This fermentation arose, like all such movements, from the contact of the Arabs with Greek speculation which continued in the East after it was driven out from the West by Justinian in 529 C. E. These ideas of the ancients dressed now in Arabic garb, through the many translations of the works of Aristotle, Plato, and a few others, created a disturbance in the minds of the devotees of the Koran, who testing its principles by the light of the newly acquired wisdom found them often wanting. Added to this there were also theologic differences among the various interpreters of the Koran. As a result, sects in Islam were springing up in great profusion, and various currents of thought were set in motion. Chief among these was the more or less orthodox philosophy, the aim of which was both to defend the doctrines of religion against heresies, as well as to reconcile them with the principles of reason. This philosophy was, of course, not of one color. It soon divided itself into a number of wings, some inclining to the right, and some possessing a more radical tendency. Some philosophers went so far as to break with religion, or at least with some of its principal tenets altogether. These, however, were the exceptions, the original tendency of reconciling religion with reason remained the predominating one. It is usually called the Kalamitic philosophy, from the Arabic word Kalam, i. e. word, and also reason.

The intellectual fermentation and division of opinion current in the larger Arabic sphere were soon reflected in the Jewish world. Here too sects arose, the most important of which is the Karaite one (Ch. XII), here too doubt of principles and forms of tradition began to be voiced, and free thought made its appearance. Not only was the Talmud bitterly assailed by the Karaites and kindred sects, but even the Bible, the very foundation of the Jewish religion, found severe critics. One of these by the name of Hivi Al-Balkhi wrote a book containing two hundred questions which, in their pertinence and severity of attack on the Bible, hardly fall beyond those of a modern rabid Bible critic. All these necessitated, of course, a systematic, scientific and organized defense of the doctrines and forms of tradition that should show not only their validity, but also their compatibility with the principles of reason and science as taught and understood then. This defense, of course, had to use the very same weapons used by the doubters and skeptics, namely, the material borrowed from general philosophy. It is thus that Jewish philosophy began. We do not really know when it began, nor can we determine accurately who was the very first Jewish philosopher. It satisfied a great need, and as such it most likely had several beginnings in different places. But we do know that by the beginning of the tenth century, it was already a developed current of thought and was given complete expression by Saadia Gaon, though attempts at philosophizing were made much earlier.

162. NATURE AND CHARACTER OF JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

The character of Jewish philosophy is determined by the conditions of its birth as well as by the general trend of thought characteristic of that era. It is primarily a theologic philosophy, as its main purpose was to defend the principles of Jewish religion from all attacks which may emanate from philosophic thought. But it had also another aim, which though it is a result of the former, yet is of no less importance, and that is to rationalize religion, and to found the principles of belief on a speculative basis. As such, the theologic element in this mass of philosophic literature occupies as much space, if not more than, the pure philosophic one. It is as much its business to enunciate as clearly as possible the dogmas of Jewish religion, as to prove their validity and rationality. The majority of the great Jewish philosophers not only devoted considerable space in their writings to the classification and fixation of the dogmas of Judaism, but even arranged the plan of their books in accordance with the dogmatic scheme.

From the fundamental traits of the nature and character of this literature, there follow the general lines of its division. Roughly speaking, Jewish philosophic literature is divided into two great divisions, metaphysics and ethics, namely, books which deal primarily with problems of a metaphysical nature, or where the principles of religion are discussed in the light of metaphysics, and books where the center of gravity is the delineation of human conduct. But as both the principles of Jewish religion and ethics are grounded in the Bible, intelligent discussion of any of these problems could not be carried on without recurring to the necessity of a reinterpretation of the Bible along philosophical lines. And in course of time, a considerable branch of philosophical-exegesis and ultimately also homiletics came into being.

Again, no philosophy or rational theology or any process of thought could be carried on without devoting some attention to the principles of logic as preparatory to all thought. So as a result, logic occupies an important place in that literature, and books devoted to its elucidation increased with the development of that literature. Likewise, certain metaphysical-religious problems as well as ethical, such as that of the soul and human conduct, can not be understood without a knowledge of psychology, and of course, even this study had to be included in the scope of this literature. Nor can the question of God which, as will be seen, is the kernel of this philosophy, be understood without a knowledge of the physical world and its laws. And thus the circle widened, and as the interest in study grew, it became more ramified and included more and more branches.

For our purpose, however, we will divide this literature into its three main branches. (A) Philosophy, dealing primarily with problems of metaphysical Theology, the enunciation of dogmas, and also including logic, psychology and physical sciences. (B) Ethics; and finally (C) Philosophical exegesis. On the whole, the last two divisions consist primarily of original books written by Jewish scholars either in Arabic or Hebrew. Of the first division, only those relating to metaphysics and theology are mostly original, while those relating to logic, psychology and physical sciences are to a greater extent translations, which, in view of the fact that they served as the channel through which the wisdom and science of the East flowed to the Christian West, assume exceptional importance and deserve special consideration.

163. PROBLEMS OF JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

From all that has been said, the nature of the problems which are dealt with in Jewish philosophy and theology can easily be inferred. God, of course, occupies the central place around which the discussion turns. This central problem really comprises a group of problems. In general, there are to be discerned in it two phases, the concept of God as such, and God and the world. The first is subdivided into: the question of proving the existence of God, conception of His essence and unity, and the problem of attributes.

The second embracing the relation of God to the world includes the problems of creation, Providence, and human freedom. Together with these problems there are inherently connected a number of theological questions, as for instance reward and punishment of man for good and bad actions, which is only a species of Providence. But we can not speak of good and bad actions unless we deal with God's commandments which are embodied in the Torah and the Bible. Hence, the authority of the Bible, its purpose, and eternity are brought in, which again involves the conception of prophecy in general, and that of Moses, the Law-giver in particular. Thus, the circle widens, and the chain of problems extends until it covers the entire field of religion.

The other important problem is the problem of the soul, its nature, divisions, and mainly its immortality, and finally comes the problem of ethics. This last one occupies an exceptionally important place in Jewish philosophic literature, for is not all Judaism a way of life?

Yet, the lines between these problems can only be formally drawn, for in reality, they all intertwine with one another. We can hardly speak of an ethical personality without attributing to man freedom of action, but this can hardly be understood without a clear conception of the relation of God to man, namely, does God know beforehand human action, or does He not? If he does not know, then His Providence is impaired. If he does know, how can man act otherwise than what God in His wisdom ordained for him? And how can he be said to be free? The solution of this problem has occupied the best minds in Jewry. But no solution is here intended, merely an endeavor to show the interconnection of the problems. Again, no Jewish ethics can be spoken of without understanding the nature, character, and authority of the Torah, the very source of Jewish ethics, and thus again, ethics is linked to the other problems. In general, it can be said that God and the Bible are the two poles of the axis around which this philosophic-theologic literature revolves.

It is of course true, that not all these problems were really solved by Jewish philosophy. It is, in general, very doubtful whether philosophy as a whole has ever solved its problems with certainty. But that this great attempt to rationalize the principles and doctrines of Judaism, which has occupied so many brilliant minds for centuries, has contributed to the elevation of Judaism, and that the literature wherein it has embodied is of a lasting value, of this there is no doubt.

A. Philosophy

164. LOGIC

As no philosophical thinking can be carried on without a knowledge of logic which supplies the very basis for such processes of thought, it is understood that logic occupied an important place in Jewish philosophic literature, as well as in philosophy of the Middle Ages in general.

As a matter of fact, the logic of Aristotle, which during that period comprised the entire science of logic, was the basis of all Mediæval philosophy, constituting the most important subject of education in those days. His Organon, consisting of eight books which includes also his rhetoric and poetics, was translated into Arabic several times and a number of digests and compendia were made of it by various philosophers. Likewise, numerous commentaries were written on these books.

All this literature, or at least a large part of it, was destined to be translated into Hebrew later, after the interest of philosophy among Hebrew reading people increased. But in the very period of bloom of Jewish philosophy, in the period from Saadia to Maimonides, what we may call the classical period, few books on logic were written or even translated by Jewish scholars. The reason for it can readily be seen. The Jewish philosophers of the classical period wrote their books, almost without exception, in Arabic for an intelligent reading public which was acquainted with the current Arabic philosophy, and they took the acquaintance of the readers with the principles of logic for granted. They, therefore, did not think it necessary to write special treatises on logic.

Only two men, one in the beginning of the period and one at the end, thought it necessary to deal with that subject. These are Isaac

Israeli and Maimonides, Isaac ben Suleiman Israeli (845–945) was born in Egypt, and later migrated to Kairwan, North Africa, where he served for a long time as court physician to the Caliph Ubaid-Allah, the founder of the Fatimide Dynasty. He was famous as a physician, and his works were translated into Latin, and for a long time used as textbooks. He was also a Jewish philosopher, probably the earliest one, and wrote a number of works. He wrote a book on logic which is mentioned by Arabic writers under the name of the *Garden of Wisdom.* The book, however, is lost. Another work of his also written in Arabic entitled *On Definitions and Description,* is preserved in a Latin translation, and a part also in a Hebrew translation by one Nissim ben Moses. The book is primarily a collection of excerpts of philosophical statements in definition of certain concepts from the writings of philosophers. Of the concepts defined, the most important are: the essence, or the whatness (quidditas) of things, quality, and causality. The book was well known in his time and is even referred to by Maimonides.

Maimonides' contribution to logic is a little book written in Arabic called *Logical Terms.* It was one of his early works written about 1160 and was later translated into Hebrew by Moses Ibn Tibbon under the name *Miloth Hahigoyon.* It can really be termed a brief introduction to philosophy, inasmuch as it really covers all philosophical terms and also describes briefly the division of the sciences. It contains fourteen chapters, where, with the usual Maimonidean clearness, all philosophical terms are defined. The first chapter defines the terms subject, predicate and judgment; Chapters II–V define the various kinds of judgment, positive, negative, contrary and contradictory. The following two chapters deal with the syllogism, and Chapter VIII with concepts. Chapters IX–XIV describe the four causes, material, formal, active and final, genus and species, the categories, substance and accident and sundry rhetorical terms such as synonyms, homonyms and figures of speech. The last chapter describes briefly the various sciences, the parts of philosophy, metaphysics, ethics and politics.

165. THE EARLY JEWISH PHILOSOPHERS

As stated above, we can hardly determine with accuracy the beginning of Jewish philosophy. Undoubtedly, attempts were made by various men to philosophize much earlier than the beginning of the tenth century, the time when the first philosophical treatises began to appear. The need came not only from without, that is, through the influence of

Arabic thought, but also from within. The leaders of the Karaites often boasted of their superiority in interpreting the Bible in a rational way, so as to remove all anthropomorphic expressions, and accused the Rabbinites, i. e. the Talmudic Jews, of holding grosser conceptions of God, and to substantiate their claim they pointed to anthropomorphic Agadic passages. To refute the claims of the Karaites, leading Jewish scholars began early to delve into philosophy, and show not only the purity of Rabbinic theology, but also the rationality of that tradition. However, if there were any philosophical treatises before the century indicated, they were lost.

The early Jewish philosophers whose treatises were wholly or partly preserved were David Ibn Merwan Al-Mukamis of Rakka in Mesopotamia, and the above-mentioned Isaac Israeli of Kairwan. David Al-Mukamis is quoted a number of times by Arabic and later Jewish scholars, but little is known of his biography. It is, however, almost certain that he was a younger contemporary of Saadia and died before the year 937, for in that year, he is spoken of by a Karaite author as dead. He must have had a checkered career for it is told that he was converted to Christianity and then returned to Judaism.

His philosophic treatise was called the *Book of the Twenty Tractates,* and was written in Arabic but it must have been later translated into Hebrew, as fragments of a Hebrew version were preserved. The book deals primarily with the proofs of the existence of God and His Attributes. From what was preserved, we can see that he resembles Saadia in his philosophic method. As a matter of fact, one proof of his of the incorporeality of God, which is based on the assumption that every body being composed of matter and form must have a creator, and this is contrary to the concept of God as the Creator of all, is almost identically stated by Saadia. It was even said that Saadia was influenced by Al-Mukamis, but it does not necessarily follow, for both employed the methods of the current philosophy of the Kalam (see Sect. 160). The book treated also of the Jewish law, and besides contained a history of Jewish sects. Karaite authors quote extracts from it on this subject.

Isaac Israeli wrote, besides his works on logic, also a number of treatises dealing with metaphysical problems of the day, such as the existence of God, creation, the soul and other kindred questions. The most important of his treatises is the *Book of the Elements* written in Arabic which was translated in 1210, at request of the great scholar David Kimhi, into Hebrew by Abraham Ben Hisdai. The book is divided into three parts. In the first one he explains the Aristotelian theory of elements. In the second, that of Galen and Hippocrates, and in the third one, he discusses the nature and characteristics of the elements. The book shows Israeli's great knowledge of the philosophy and science of his day. As a great physician, he was a master of physics and medicine, and the book appears more as a treatise on these two sciences, but the purpose was a metaphysical one. Its aim is to prove the most important contention for religious philosophers of that period, namely, the creation of the world from nothing, which involves, of course, the refutation of the accepted Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world. It is, in reality, a reconciliation of the Aristotelian principles of metaphysics and physics with the Jewish principle of creation. He shows, therefore, by an interpretation of these very principles, especially the conceptions of being and becoming of things, that we must arrive to the notion of creation, and not to the eternity of the world as Aristotle did. This is his main thesis, for with the exception of this great defect in Aristotle's theory, Israeli, like so many Jewish philosophers, is in perfect accord with Aristotle and is quite satisfied with the latter's proofs for the existence of God. For this reason, he does not touch upon this problem. His thesis is proven at length with many arguments drawn from the entire field of science, especially from medicine, his own specialty.

Besides this book, he wrote another treatise on the spirit and the soul where psychological problems were discussed, but only a fragment of the Hebrew translation is preserved. He has also written commentaries to the first chapters of Genesis, and the famous mystic work, *Book of Creation* (see Ch. XII), but of these later.

166. SAADIA

These previous attempts were only partial efforts to elucidate one or more of these problems of Jewish philosophy. But soon there arose a man who knitted all these strands of philosophical thought into one system and gave us a complete statement of Jewish religious philosophy as bearing on all phases of theology. That man was the Gaon Saadia (for life, see Ch. VIII). His book, called in Arabic *Kitab Al-Amanat* Wal-I'tikadât, better known in the Hebrew name *Emunoth We-Deoth,* i. e. Doctrines and Religious Beliefs, was the first systematic treatise in philosophic literature.

In his elucidating introduction, Saadia states the purpose of his book, saying, that having observed how so many Jews are engulfed in matters of belief by doubts and buffeted by waves of error, he took pity upon them and undertook to write this book to guide them in their search for the right path. That such a thing is possible, Saadia was convinced, for error, he believed together with Aristotle, arises not from the sense perceptions but from an inability to operate with the instruments of knowledge, which is logical reasoning. At times, it may be due to the impatience of men to go through the entire process of reasoning. He, therefore, advises both patience and skillful use of reasoning and then we shall arrive to pure belief which is in harmony with reason. It is only little and hasty knowledge that brings to heresy. Heresy may also arise when men possess only simple belief without any foundation of reason. It is, therefore, the duty of the great man to show to all intelligent men, that all that we received through revelation and the prophets can be actually understood by us through reason. This purpose or rather double purpose, namely, to show that the principles of Judaism are compatible with reason and are not to be doubted, and also to interpret them in such a way that their rationality be evident, first outlined clearly by Saadia, became the purpose of all succeeding Jewish philosophers. Saadia bases his contentions, in the introduction, on an elaborate theory of knowledge which is skilfully though briefly stated. After that he proceeds to the main body of the book.

The book is divided into ten sections each of which is subdivided into chapters. The first nine sections establish philosophically the ten fundamental articles of faith—which were almost unnecessarily expanded by Maimonides into thirteen—the tenth is devoted to Ethics. The first two are devoted to the problem of the existence of God, and the pure conception of the Godhead, namely, His Attributes. Saadia gives this section a theologic turn by naming the former Hidush, i. e. creation, and the later unity (Ahdut), for in the first, he proves not only the existence of God, but also the creation of the world, thus establishing two dogmas at once, In this, he was influenced by the philosophers of the Kalam who always proved the existence of God by the indirect method of creation from nothing. It would be too abstruse to enter into the details of the proofs here. Suffice it to say, that they are primarily based on Aristotelian principles which were all dominant then but with certain deviations, which deviations of course led to the overthrow of the Aristotelian conclusion that the world is eternal. These principles are two, the finitude of the world and the composite nature of all matter. There is added a third non-Aristotelian principle, and that is the finitude of time. The logical manipulation of these principles proves that the world is created, and *eo ipso* that there is a Creator, i. e. God. This last, however, needs further proof, for one may argue that the world created itself. After the theory of chance creation is refuted, Saadia proceeds to prove the third link, the creation from nothing, and not from some primal matter, a theory which was advocated by Plato and his followers. This problem of all problems is Mediæval religious philosophy, namely, that of creation, which has quite some importance even today, was handled by Saadia with great skill, and his method was frequently imitated by later philosophers.

The establishment of the existence of God and His being Creator of the world leads directly to a pure conception of Him, for the very proofs involve a pure conception of God, namely, that He is incorporeal, immutable, and above all establish His unity. Unity of God is the most important of them, for its pure conception involves also incorporeality and immutability, as it does not mean that God is one numerically, but also that He is absolutely simple and pure spirit. Hence, the whole second section is denominated Unity, for on its right conception depend all other attributes. The Attributes are, according to Saadia, four: one, living, potent, and wise. The first relates to the concept God by itself, the other three to God as creator of the world. The main problem consists first, in showing that we can describe God by these attributes, and yet not impair the absolute unity and imply no change in His essence; secondly, how to square the pure conception of these few attributes with so many passages in the Bible where God is described in human terms. Both phases are dealt with by Saadia in a detailed way, explaining how all attributes are really one in essence, and we only speak of them as several because of the inadequacy of language. Likewise, other attributes which we apply to God such as loving or hating are to be understood in a figurative way. Similarly all Biblical passages which deviate from the high conception of God only speak figuratively but do not imply anything which may impugn that pure conception. In this fine and elaborate explanation, Saadia enunciates a great principle of philosophical exegesis, which reads thus, "Know the rule that wherever it is found in the Bible or anywhere else an expression concerning God and His deeds which differs from the way of true philosophy, it is undoubtedly to be explained figuratively."[1] This principle had far-reaching consequences.

After establishing the three fundamental dogmas, the existence of God, the purity of His conception, and His creation of the world, Saadia turns to the relation of God and the world. The third section is devoted to the authority and value of the Torah. God commanded people to observe His teaching, but wherefore? In answer to this question, Saadia explains first the reason for the creation of the world and man. Creation came as an act of His infinite goodness, for existence is a good in itself. And since creation is a result of God's goodness, it follows that He should endow the creatures with means to make their existence still better, and hence He gave them the Torah, which is a means for a good life. He did not create men naturally good, for there is a higher degree of good obtained when man struggles for its attainment. This Torah is divided into two parts, one containing precepts which are fully substantiated by reason, and the other such precepts which are to be obeyed merely because God commanded them, although we can not comprehend their reason. Yet, he says there was need for a revelation even as regards the rational part for the details of the precepts needed such a revelation, reason may recognize the general validity of such precepts but not their extent and mode of operation. As for the precepts which merely require obedience, even they have a reasonable basis, although it is not always evident.

This revelation was, of course, given through the prophets, and he discusses therefore the question of prophecy, its authenticity and its necessity for the people. He makes the point that the real authority for the prophetic teaching is not the miracles by which it was demonstrated, but the inner worth. The same is applied to the Torah, its value is intrinsic, and hence its immutability. This last point is proven at great length, in the course of which, Saadia raises a point which especially deserves attention. He proves the eternity of the Torah from the promised eternity of the Jewish people. "Our people," he says, "is a distinct people only by its teachings, and if it is eternal in its uniqueness, it follows that its Torah must also remain eternally unchanged, for otherwise its very character would be changed."

From this discussion of the character of the Torah as a means to human happiness, Saadia proceeds to prove, in the fourth section, the freedom of man, which is a necessary assumption for his previous contention of the Bible being a means of happiness. Here, he stumbles on the difficult problem of free will and its compatibility with Divine prescience of human actions. He grapples with the problem and solves it by saying that God knows the ultimate decision of man, but His knowledge does not determinate the latter's choice of action.

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[1] Emunoth, Sect. 2, ch. III.

If man is a free agent, then it follows that he deserves both reward and punishment for his good and bad deeds. To the elucidation of this question and the problem it entails, the fifth section on *Merits and Demerits* is devoted. Saadia endeavors to demonstrate the Biblical teachings on this subject in the light of reason. He is especially interested in the old problem of Job, why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. He offers various solutions, but the subject is not really exhausted here, as the main solution, namely, that the real reward and punishment come in the hereafter, needs as its basis the assumption of the immortality of the soul. To the soul, then, the sixth section is devoted. It contains really Saadia's psychology. Briefly it is thus: The soul is created by God and it is of a fine spiritual substance. As to its manifestation in the body, it appears under three aspects or parts, the appetite, i. e. those desires which crave to satisfy the elemental needs of man, such as food, procreation, and others; *emotion* or spirit, and *cognition* or reason. This primarily platonic-Aristotelian division corresponds to the three appellations of the soul in Hebrew, Nephesh, Ruah, i. e. the spirit, and Neshamah, respectively. The immortality of the soul is partly proved here from its very nature, and partly later in the ninth chapter.

The three succeeding sections are all devoted to the problem of reward and punishment under different aspects. The first is that of resurrection (Sect. 7). It is intimately connected with the nature of the soul, and also the question of Divine justice, especially justice to the Jewish people which suffered so much. Resurrection is going to be a part of the reward. He discusses its possibility from a natural point of view and endeavors to prove it. Intimately connected with this question of Divine justice to the Jew, is the coming of the Messiah to which the eighth section is devoted. He shows that the prophecies must be fulfilled, for otherwise the suffering of Israel can not be explained, and even attempts to determine the time of the coming of the Messiah. As usual, he devotes a good deal of space to criticism of theories which deny this doctrine or interpret it in a figurative way. Finally, he comes to the point of his problem, that of the reward and punishment in the hereafter. He picks up here the trend of his thought in the previous sections, namely, that of the immortality of the soul and its reward and punishment after death. The first is proven again from the fact that life is too short, and therefore God's scheme of justice can not be carried out in the earthly life, and must be prolonged till after death, hence the soul is immortal. The nature of that reward and punishment is discussed together with the conception of the world to come. As always Saadia tries to give a more rational aspect to some of these conceptions expressed in the Bible and the Agada.

With this chapter, the book properly comes to an end, but he added a tenth chapter on Ethics, where after a detailed criticism of various theories and ways of life, he offers his own which is, that the best way to follow is the one which aims at a coördination and harmony of the various forces of human nature, where each force is given sway but in a limited and controlled way. He refers to the harmony in nature and music, and advises us to follow it in life. Even from this rather brief glimpse of the contents of Saadia's work, we can glean the completeness of his system and the masterly way in which it was executed. He can really be called the Father of Jewish Philosophy.

167. SOLOMON IBN GABIROL

With Saadia there closes the school of Jewish philosophy in Babylonia, and as all other phases in Jewish literature of the period, also that of Jewish philosophy found its great center in Spain. The first Jewish philosopher in that country was the poet, Solomon Ibn Gabirol (see Ch. IX). His great philosophical work is, the *Fons Vitæ,* Well of Life, (Heb. Mekor Hayyim), which was originally written in Arabic but for one reason or another, it was not translated into Hebrew in its entirety, only selections of it were made by Shem-tob Ibn Falaquera (1224–1290). It was, however, translated into Spanish as early as the beginning of the twelfth century by Johannes Hispalensis and soon into Latin about 1150 by Dominic Gundisalvi. In the Latin translation, it made a great impression upon the Christian world, and for centuries it influenced Western scholastic thought. But the name of its author, Gabirol, was forgotten. It assumed a number of variations, Avicebron, Avicebrol, and others. The author was thought to be an Arab, and some believed him even to be a Christian. Only in the middle of the nineteenth century, the great Jewish scholar, Solomon Munk at Paris, made the discovery that the famous Avicebron is no other but Solomon Ibn Gabirol. He then published the Hebrew selection of Falaquera. In our own day, a complete Hebrew translation of the book from the Latin was made and published in Palestine.

And just as the career of his book was so different from those of the works of the other Jewish philosophers, so is his philosophy different from that of all his predecessors and those that follow him, except the few who were, to a small degree, influenced by his teachings. Gabirol swerved in his teachings from the beaten track of Jewish philosophy which is in nature both theologic and Aristotelian. His book is a purely philosophic one, and does not attempt to reconcile Jewish teaching with philosophy. He could not of course escape the religious kernel in philosophy, for that was the very essence of philosophic thought from the time of Plotinus (d. 270) and even of the earlier thinkers. Nor did he escape the influence of Aristotle, for both things were an impossibility in those days. Gabirol is, therefore, a religious philosopher, not a theologic one, and that par excellence, for his was the deepest religious soul as we have seen in his poetry. He is also more of a Neo-Platonist than an Aristotelian though he differed from both. We do not really know how he could have been so deeply influenced by Neo-Platonic teachings, as little of the works of the founder of the school, Plotinus, and his followers were translated into Arabic, yet he seemed to have mastered its teachings.

His main problem is that of personal salvation, namely, to define the purpose of the life of man. This he finds to be the communion of his soul with the upper world or with its source. The next question which presents itself is, by what means can this communion be effected? and the answer is given, by knowledge and action. But though both are mentioned, the emphasis is placed on knowledge or contemplation, and to the elucidation of this answer the whole book is devoted. It is supposed to answer the questions, what is there to know as well as what is the contents of the knowledge. The answer to the first, states briefly that there are three tings to know, (*a*) God, the first existent, (*b*) matter and form, and (*c*) the great Divine power, the will. The second question, namely, what is the content of this knowledge, is treated in detail. As we can see from the subjects of knowledge, the problems are three, God, the world (matter and form), and creation. Yet Gabirol deals very little with the subject of God, he offers no proofs for His existence, nor does he dwell on His attributes except in his philosophic poem, the Royal Crown (see Ch. IX), where he speaks of them more in a figurative way. His main theme is the world and its becoming and the five sections or portals of the book are primarily devoted to it.

There are seven substances, (*1*) God, pure spiritual substance; (*2*) the will which is an all-embracive power in God, conceived both as something of the essence of God and as something separate; (*3*) universal matter; (*4*) universal form, which in their combination produce the Universal Reason; (*5*) universal soul; (*6*) universal nature; (*7*) the substance of the nine categories. This last one forms the boundary between the world of intelligibles and the sensible world. Of these substances, God, the first one is practically the unknown. He is above all conceptions, hence Gabirol refrains from discussing His attributes. All that we know of Him is His existence. He is also denominated the first agent. But how has this universe arisen? To this Gabirol attempts to answer; it arose through the mediacy of the other three substances, the will, matter and form. The will which is a kind of emanation flashes through the universal matter and unites it with the universal form and henceforth becoming gradually descends. The whole universe is one grand ladder where there are many rungs, but it is all one, the various higher substances serve as causes and places for the lower, until we reach this sensible world which is expressed by space and body in space. In all this gradual series of emanation of substances, the further a substance is from the first source, the more material and corporeal it becomes. But through all this series, the Divine Will flashes and lightens it up, and thus unifies it into one.

The human soul is an emanation and a part of the world soul, and is of course eternal. In uniting with the body, it acquires sensibility and thus is really lowered from its pristine purity. But it retains the desire to return to the source, which return can be accomplished by reason, by striving to unite with the world reason and through it with the source of all sources, God.

In all this, there is much Neo-Platonism, but Gabirol differs from it in two important points. First, he introduces the will of God as the leaven of all these emanations, while in that system the gradual emanations are performed in a kind of mechanical way. Gabirol has thus saved the Jewish idea of creation. The second is the acceptance of the Aristotelian doctrine of the dualism of matter and form, but he deviates from it as he raises matter above form, in making the universal matter one of the first substances—and thus one of the first emanations. This subject is not entirely clear in Gabirol, and lent itself to various interpretations, some making universal matter an emanation, and some believing it to be an uncreated thing. It still needs investigation.

Gabirol's philosophy, though original and deep, did not influence the course of Jewish philosophy to a great extent, only some of his theories found followers. On the whole, his ignoring Jewish matters and his Neo-Platonic bent subjected him to severe criticism, on the part of his immediate followers. He was thus severely criticized by Abraham Ibn Daud (see Sect. 169), but later entirely neglected. Only the much later mysticism again picked up the trend of his thought, but even then seldom mentioned his name, though utilizing his ideas to a great extent.

168. BAHYA BEN JOSEPH IBN PAKUDAH

Bahya ben Joseph Ibn Pakuda (c. 1050), surnamed the judge, was another Jewish philosopher of that period and probably lived in the same town with the poet-philosopher, Gabirol. He was primarily interested in ethics, but also dealt with the fundamental philosophic problems of the day, namely, God, His Attributes, and the creation of the world which involved of course that of matter and form. His main work is the *Hoboth ha-Lebaboth,* the Duties of the Heart. The book was written in Arabic, but later translated into Hebrew by the master translator, Judah Ibn Tibbon. There is also another translation of that book by Joseph Kimhi, grammarian and commentator, but that of Tibbon is the accepted one.

The purpose of the book, as stated, is an ethical one. The author says in the Introduction, "The Torah is divided into two parts, one is the duties of the organs, i. e. all such precepts the performance of which depends upon the external organs of the body, and the other is *the duties of the heart,* namely, those belonging to the human conscience. But while," says Bahya, "so many books were written of the first part, such as all codes, few have dealt with the other." Hence he undertook to write this book. But, the duties of the heart which include the love of God, His worship, and trust in Him can not be understood without a clear conception of the Godhead. He, therefore, devoted the first portal or section to this very conception. The book contains in all ten portals, where phases of ethics and piety are discussed, such as service of God, trust in Him, humility, temperance of human conduct, and finally the love of God.

The first portal is called The Portal of Unity. In it, Bahya proves the existence of God and defines His Attributes. His method is similar to that of Saadia whose book he read, and even mentions in his introduction, inasmuch as he also proves the existence of God indirectly through the fact that the world needs a creator, and adduces a number of philosophical proofs. On the whole, they are less complicated. He was the first to employ, in Jewish philosophy, the famous Argument from Design, namely, that the world in its complicated aspect and its harmonious arrangement testifies that it was created by the design of a creator.

As his main interest lies in forming a pure conception of God, he devotes considerable space to the Unity of God for which he quotes seven proofs, one of which is that the world testifies not only to a creator but to one, for it is so beautifully harmonious that we must involuntarily conclude that it is a manifestation of the plan of one creator. In his Theory of Attributes, he differs greatly from Saadia. He makes a distinct division of the attributes into two classes, essential and active. The first are those which belong to God, independently of the fact that He is the creator of the world, the second are those we bestow on Him by observing His actions. The former are: existent, one, and eternal. These are, of course, sublime, pure, and abstract, and can by no means be understood positively, but negatively. For example, when we say God is existent, we do not mean to imply that we have any positive knowledge of His existence, but we merely mean to deny the assertion that He does not exist, and thus with the others. He was the first one to introduce the term negative meaning, as applied to the attributes, and was followed by many.

There is also ascribed to Bahya another book called, the Doctrine of the Soul (Torath ha-Nefesh), which was only lately translated into Hebrew. But while in his Duties of the Heart, he follows the rationalistic philosophy of the day, i. e. the Aristotelian, tempered by the Arabic Kalam, in the other, he is influenced by the Neo-Platonic strain which came to him as well as the others through the mystic philosophy of the "Society of the Pure Brothers," a philosophic mystic brotherhood of the East which flourished in the tenth century, and which left an encyclopaedia where its ideas are expressed. He discusses there primarily the nature of the soul and its conduct, but this problem brings him to other problems, such as the emanation of the soul from higher spheres, the different worlds, and ultimately the nature of the creation of the world which, as always, involves a discussion of matter and form. On the whole there is resemblance in this book to some of the doctrines of Gabirol, and an air of mysticism and asceticism pervades it.

169. ABRAHAM BAR HIYYA, MOSES IBN EZRA AND JOSEPH IBN ZADDIK

Besides these leading men, the age produced a number of philosophers of minor importance, yet who nevertheless made some important contributions to philosophic teaching. The first one is Abraham bar Hiyya, the prince (d. c. 1100). He was primarily a scientist and wrote many books on astronomy and mathematics (see Ch. XV), but also several books on philosophy, the most important of which is, Reflections of the Soul. It was written originally in Hebrew and was probably the first of its kind written in that language. It is primarily an ethical book (see Sect. B) divided into four sections, or as he calls it pillars, three of which are devoted to the finding of the best way of life, repentance and the destiny of man. The first deals with the beginning and nature of the world. It is here where he develops philosophical ideas on the nature of things and matter and form. He also makes the assertion, which was already made by Philo, that the world was first created potentially and later called forth into actuality by the word, and this is the creation which is described in the first chapter of Genesis.

The poet, Moses Ibn Ezra (see Ch. IX), also wrote a book on philosophy under the euphonious name "Bed of Spices" (Arugath ha-Bosem) where he deals with problems of creation, the triple nature, or three souls of man, on truth and other philosophical theological questions. There is little originality in the book, as it is mostly eclectic, and it seems that he was greatly influenced by Gabirol in his views.

The most important of these was Joseph Ibn Zaddik, judge at Cordova (b. 1080—d. 1149). His main philosophic work is the *Microcosm* (Olam Kotan) which was written in Arabic and later translated into Hebrew. By the microcosm is meant man, who in his body and soul resembles the great world. This analogy was well known in Jewish literature. Iban Zaddik makes man the starting point of his inquiry. It is, he believes, through knowing himself that man can reach to a perfect knowledge of the world and its creator, God. The first section of the book is therefore devoted to an analysis of man and his soul, and deals of course with the inevitable problem of matter and form of which all things and man also are composed. In this discussion, as well as in the conception of the soul, the influence of Gabirol can be detected.

After he analyzed the microcosm and its two elements, the finite and infinite—body and soul—he comes to the main purpose, the knowledge of God. He believes that such knowledge, pure theology, is the root of all religion, for the fruit of philosophy and its practical value, is to imitate the actions of God as much as possible. He launches then a criticism against the current conception of the attributes of God, of the Kalam, which, according to him, is not pure. He then begins to develop his own theory which is, that the essence of God as such can not be conceived except through His actions. All that we can know is that He exists. He offers a few proofs for the existence of God, then goes on to define His unity and makes the point that it is really uniqueness, for God is unlike all His creatures and is therefore undefinable. He finds great difficulty in explaining how creation in time, by the will of God, was effected, but he overcomes it. He then comes to the theory of attributes. As he proves the existence of God through the creation of the world, so His attributes can only be deduced from that concept. God, in essence is really inconceivable, but on observing His activity, we may conclude that He is existent, potent, wise and also good. We may add also truthful, for truth and reality are one, whatever is real is true, and since God is reality, it follows that truthfulness is an attribute. But all these attributes are only human attempts to understand God, and are in no wise to be understood as possessing a positive description of Him.

Ibn Zaddik's contribution consists mainly in his critical efforts to show that we can not really conceive the essence of God, a task which he has performed with thoroughness, and thus ennobled the conception of the Divine.

170. JUDAH HALEVI

Judah Halevi, who, as we have seen (Ch. X), was one of the outstanding poets of this period, also made a mark as a Jewish philosopher. His philosophy is expressed in the book *Al-Kuzari* which was originally written in Arabic, and later translated into Hebrew by Judah Iban Tibbon.

The purpose of this book is not so much to reconcile the principles of Judaism with that of the current philosophy, as to show practically the insufficiency of philosophy and the superiority of the truths revealed by religion over those arrived at by mere logical reasoning. Yet, in spite of this intention, he made important contributions to Jewish philosophic thought, and developed what we would call a philosophy of history. Besides, he did not really reject philosophic tenets, and incorporated many of them in his system so that in a general way he is in accord with the other Jewish philosophers. He only aimed to combat extreme rationalism, which not only claims sufficiency for reason, but makes contemplation the highest good.

The *Kuzari* is unique not only by its content but also by its form. It is practically the only book in Jewish philosophy, at least in the classic period, written in the form of a dialogue. Halevi utilized the story of the conversion of the Khazars—a Tartar tribe on the Volga—to Judaism as the basis of his discourse. The story, which was related in the letter of the Khazar king, Joseph, to the Jewish leader, Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (920–970) of Cordova, tells of a dramatic episode, how an early King, Bulan by name (c. 740), was in search of the true religion, for an angel appeared to him in a dream admonishing him to do so. He then called the representatives of Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Judaism to hear their arguments and finally became convinced of the superiority of the last named which he shortly afterwards embraced, inviting a Jewish scholar to teach him the principles of Judaism. Halevi embellished somewhat the story and cast his discourse in the form of a dialogue between the Khazar king and the Jewish scholar, where in the course of inquiry and response, his ideas on all important phases of Judaism are unfolded.

The fundamental principle underlying Halevi's philosophy is, that God can not be found or conceived by reason, and hence all proofs for the existence of God produced by philosophers are insufficient. He is to be conceived by an intuition, or as he calls it by the "inward eye of the soul." However, curiously enough Halevi does not enunciate the principle in the opening of his discussion but much later. It is, though, tacitly assumed at the very beginning but given more a historical, rather than a philosophical, form. Two incidents in the story of the king's conversion, contained in the opening paragraphs of the first section, give the key to his philosophy. First, Halevi makes the angel say, in a dream, to the Khazar king, "Thy intention is satisfactory but thy deeds are not satisfactory," by which phrase he wants to tell us that the strength of religion in general, and Judaism in particular, does not lie in speculation, as philosophical theologians would have us believe, but in actual practice of the precepts. The second incident is that when the king interviewed privately the representatives of Christianity and Islam and asked each one of the relative merits of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, each replied that except his religion, Judaism is the highest. This mutual agreement on the verity of Judaism is the basis of the discourse. When the dialogue begins, the Jewish scholar, in answer to the query of the king regarding his religion, tells him that he believes in the God as He revealed Himself in Jewish history. When the king is astonished at such a statement, for he expected a more theological description of God, such as He being Creator and Guide of the universe, the scholar points to this general agreement of all people on the truth of the Jewish revelation. This general belief in a thing, or "consensus omnium," as it was then called, on the truth of a thing, was considered sufficient proof for its actual veracity. Philosophically, the idea of general agreement is connected with that principle of intuition stated above, for since all people agree on a belief, it must arise from an intuition.

Halevi then does not attempt to prove the existence of God logically from manifestation of His power in the world of nature, but from such manifestation in Jewish history. But such a proof involves a limitation, and the king rightly objects that Judaism is not a universal religion but belongs only to the Jews. This is partly admitted by the scholar. Everybody can embrace Judaism, he says, but the Jewish people have an innate spiritual superiority. To substantiate his claim, he points to the gradation we see in nature. We have there, minerals, plants, living beings, and finally man, who is a distinct class by himself. Similarly there is a gradation among men, some are at the very top, and some are lower and the highest type of man is the prophet, not the philosopher. He is of a unique type, distinct from other people, as man is distinct from animals. As regards the Jews, they all have potentially prophetic ability. The inward light, the Divine influence (*Inian Elohi*), the intuition which makes for the highest religious attainment, was at first, in the history of humanity, only the share of the individuals. It was of course given by God to Adam, he transcended it to one of his sons, Seth, and so on until it reached Jacob. From Jacob on, it became the biologic share of the group, i. e. his twelve sons, and hence the entire Jewish people became endowed with it. It is an hereditary trait, that though it may not be developed in every Jew, the potentiality is there.

The Jewish people thus became the kernel of spirituality in the world, or to use another phrase of his, Israel is the heart of all nations, which purifies and distributes spiritual life blood. At times, Halevi waxes enthusiastic and calls Israel the intermediary between God and the world, the very proof for the existence of God. From this fundamental teaching, there follows of course, the high value of the Torah since it is an expression of the Will of God. It was given to the Jews as a way of life by means of which their potential spiritual ability rises to actuality.

Halevi meets also the many objections raised by the king to his rather chauvinistic theory, the principal one being the very low state of the Jews which is a glaring contradiction to their claim of superiority. To this, the scholar answers first, that suffering is no shame, and secondly, since every Jew could really liberate himself from that suffering by merely pronouncing a formula of conversion to another religion, and yet they do not employ this means of escape, their suffering then is a voluntary discipline which will ultimately lead to glory.

It is this line of reasoning that distinguishes Halevi from the other Jewish philosophers and which is largely stated in the first section of the book. The other sections are devoted to the elaboration of a complete philosophy of Judaism and its problems. In them is given a detailed exposition of the various parts of Judaism. The second section really completes the teachings of the first, taking up each in detail. Here, the questions stated in the first come in for a scrutiny. To these questions belong first of all that of the Attributes, which expressed succinctly is as follows: Granted the truth of the existence of God and the revelation of His will, but how shall we conceive Him? What attributes shall we ascribe to Him? And as far as the answer to this question is concerned, Halevi is no less philosophical than his predecessors and followers. His theory of Attributes is one of the purest in Jewish thought.

He divides the attributes into three kinds, active, relative, and negative. The active are, those which are supposed to describe God's actions. The relative are, such as men bestow upon Him out of gratitude, like holy, praised, sublime, etc. They arise entirely from the subjective state of the human mind. The negative ones are the really important attributes as they are supposed to give us a conception of His essence. These are: living, one, eternal and willing. They are really negative in meaning, for all that the attribute living, for instance, connotes is that God is not not-living, and no more. Nothing positive is meant by the attribute living, for we can not conceive the kind of life we attribute to God, and in the same manner, the other attributes are to be understood. He was the first one to introduce in Jewish philosophy the term negative for attributes, though the fact that their meaning is negative was already pointed out by Bahya. He includes will as an attribute, for he says the wonderful harmony of the world shows that not only is there a creator but also a willful one.

From such a high conception of God, it follows that revelation on Sinai as well as so many Biblical anthropomorphisms have to be explained. To the latter problem, a great part of the second section is devoted, the various metaphors are analyzed and clarified including the symbolic meaning of the sacrifices. As for the first problem Halevi explains it by adopting partly the theory of Saadia, that a voice especially created by God vibrated the air so that the Jews heard words—and thus revelation was accomplished.

In this section, Halevi completes also his view of the philosophy of Jewish history. Not only does the Jewish people possess a distinct function in the scheme of things, namely, the realization of the religious-moral ideal in the world, but Palestine also possesses a distinction. It is the only land where the Jew is able to develop the Divine spiritual kernel in him to perfection. Outside of Palestine, it is impossible, for in the Diaspora, the divine spark in the Jew does not operate. When the king points out that he has not observed any particular advantage in Palestine, the scholar replies that the influence of environment is very great even in the sphere of nature, as we see that certain fruits grow only in certain localities; and what is true in the physical world, he concludes, holds also true in the domain of humanity and spirit. In short, Halevi negates the Diaspora, and considers it only a temporary evil, hoping for the day of restoration when the Jews will be able to discharge their great function as the spiritual heart of humanity.

The third section is devoted to the development of his other principle, namely, that Judaism is a religion of action. Here, its practices are described in detail, the values of the important institutions, such as the Sabbath and the festivals and the like, are explained and classified. Very interesting is his ideal of the pious and ethical man. It is modeled after the platonic ideal as described in the Republic. In fact, he calls him a ruler, one who rules his soul and body with justice, namely, that none of their parts is prevented from exercising its legitimate function. The ideal man is neither ascetic nor devoted to appetite, but enjoys life in moderation, and of course, strives to attain the highest degree of perfection, which is Divine Spirituality, not philosophic contemplation. In this, however, Halevi parts company not only with Plato but with all Jewish philosophers who made rationalism the highest attainment. In this section, a vigorous defense of the Rabbinic tradition, against the Karaites, is made.

The fourth section is devoted to a discussion of the names of God which is really an attempt to explain His relation to the world, and contains observations on nature, creation and the manifestation of Divine powers in nature. A more detailed exposition of these problems would lead us beyond the limits of this work. In the fifth section, a very skillful résumé of the philosophical ideas of the day is given, both of the Aristotelian theory and the Jewish philosophers. In this résumé, the proofs of Saadia and Bahya for the creation of the world and Halevi's own theory of attributes are restated and proofs offered for each attribute. Finally, the problem of free will and Providence is taken up, and our author offers an interesting solution. There are, he says, two kinds of Divine causality, direct and indirect. As examples of the first kind may serve such things as the order of the universe, the fixation of genera in the kingdom of plants and animals and all such phenomena that testify to the plan of a wise maker. As an instance of the second kind, we may cite the burning of a log of wood by fire. The immediate cause of this phenomenon is easily explained, but this cause has another cause and so on until we, finally, reach the first cause, hence this kind of causality—although ultimately emanating from God—is indirect. We have then a fourfold division of events, Divine, natural, chance-wise, and elective. The Divine are those phenomena mentioned above which are immediately referred to Divine attention. The natural arise through mediate causes with an end in view; the chance-wise without order and design. The elective are those of which the human will is the cause. It is true that we trace the action of the will through a chain of causes back to God, but the connection is a loose one, no force is exerted and man is therefore free to choose. This solution, as well as all other solutions of this difficult problem, may be found wanting, but it introduces a new element of the double kind of causality, making human will a cause in itself. To the other feature of this problem, namely, the compatibility of the foreknowledge of God with freedom, Halevi did not contribute anything new, but, with Saadia and others, he asserts that God's foreknowledge of the happening of an event is not the cause of the realization of that event. With a few remarks on the departure of the scholar for Palestine—who is no other than Halevi himself—this remarkable book closes.

171. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

Abraham Ibn Ezra, the poet, grammarian, and exegete was also a deep thinker and wrote several books on philosophy. They are (*1*) *The Sepher ha-Shem* (The book on the Name of God), where certain theories regarding the conception of God as far as His names convey are expounded. (2) *Yeshod Mora* (literally, the foundation of reverence, but in Ibn Ezra's terminology, it means the Foundation of the Knowledge of God). (*3*) *Shaar ha-Shomaim* (The Gate to Heaven), which was supposed to be an introduction to the book of Genesis, but only the first chapter is preserved, the rest is lost. (*4*) *Flower bed of Wisdom and the Garden of Thought* (Arugath ha-Hokmah U-pardes ha-Mesimah), a short pamphlet with a long, rather popular name, on the proof of the existence of God and His attributes. But Ibn Ezra's philosophy is not contained entirely in these few small books. It is rather scattered in all his numerous writings, especially in his various commentaries to the Bible, and even in his grammatical works there are many deep philosophical passages. The fact that Ibn Ezra did not collect the various parts of his philosophical speculations into one place, and added to this the jerky and unsystematic manner in which he stated his thoughts as well as his rather cryptic and mystic style, make an orderly exposition of his philosophy extremely difficult. We can only gain glimpses of his thought process here and there.

In general, it can be said that Ibn Ezra did not deal with all the problems of Jewish philosophy, as his psychology and ethics are very imperfectly stated. Only scattered remarks can be found on these subjects in his writings. He devoted himself, like Gabirol, primarily to the problem of the world, namely, the right conception of the universe, its forces, the manner of its becoming and its relation to God. In his theories, he was greatly influenced by Plato, Aristotle, Neo-Platonism and Gabirol. Knowledge, according to him, consists mainly in reason, not in sense experience. True, experience supplies the material, but it is reason which gives us knowledge by giving form to this raw matter and obtains the general concept. Therefore, higher knowledge consists only of the general concepts. These concepts are eternal, and likewise, the very essence of all things is an eternal thing, so is also the human soul, which is the essence of man, eternal. In general, there are not in this world any pure material things entirely devoid of spirituality, except, that in some the spiritual force is more in evidence and in some it is hidden. Pure bodies such as minerals also possess a spiritual side, namely, the forces and the laws according to which they operate. In plants, there is a higher manifestation of spirituality inasmuch as its activity is more complex and so on. The higher we ascend in the scale the more spiritual things become, until we come to the existence of pure spiritual forces—and above all to God.

All things, says Ibn Ezra, have substance and form. That substance, abstracted from all material properties which are only accidents, is also a kind of spiritual force, but the real form determines it and gives it a more definite shape. Like Gabirol, he believes in the prior existence of that substance—substratum to the form. We can not really determine what Ibn Ezra thought on the subject of the general or, as he calls it, the hidden substance whether it existed eternally or that it is a kind of emanation from God. But creation he supposes in this way: God through His will—this also is of great importance with him—implanted the form which is the active dynamic force in this hidden substratum, and hence all activity began through a series of worlds.

There are, teaches Ibn Ezra, three worlds—the upper world which contains the forces, pure spiritual forces, then the middle world where there are nine spheres which are already bodies but of a higher type, namely, imperishable bodies, then the lower world—that of ours where the laws of operation are more mechanical. To this complicated system of worlds, God only is the staying power, and it is His power or will which flashes through all the worlds.

Ibn Ezra did not elaborate his system and we know little about all other problems which troubled the Jewish mind. He only endeavored to save the doctrine of the creation of the world from nothing by saying that the hidden matter-substratum was really nothing until form was given to it. In his popular treatise mentioned above, he proves the creation of the world and the existence of God in the manner of Saadia and Bahya. He states the attributes to be: one, eternal, and wise. This treatise is written in fine rhymed prose.

On the whole, Ibn Ezra appears as a man of a dual nature. He has been considered a radical and a rationalist, yet there is a mystic strain in all his writings, and especially in his philosophy. Many of his expressions and assertions remind us of the Kabbalists and his particular style lends itself to a mystic interpretation. We can see in him a man who in his inner personality strives after communion with God and thirsts for Him, but in his external personality appears often in a lighter mood. He lacked the completeness and harmony of soul of Gabirol and Halevi and was therefore unable to give us a complete system of thought. But what he gave us helped to deepen the current of Jewish thought.

172. ABRAHAM IBN DAUD

Abraham Ibn Daud (b. 1110–d. 1180) of Toledo, was one of the outstanding men in Spanish Jewry, in the first half of the twelfth century, and he made important contributions to Jewish literature. Unfortunately, very little is known about his life. All that we know of it is that he belonged to a very noble family, which traced its descent to the exiles from Jerusalem who came to Spain, in early times, and that he studied, under Rabbi Baruch Ibn Albalia, the famous Talmudic scholar and astronomer, until the sixteenth year of his life. His education must have been many sided for he was a physician by profession and wrote works on philosophy, astronomy and Jewish history. Of the rest of his life, practically nothing is known, except its end which was very tragic, as he died a martyr's death.

As a philosopher, Ibn Daud holds an important place in the history of Jewish philosophy, and his book entitled in Hebrew *Emunah Ramah* (Exalted Belief) is a very meritorious attempt at the reconciliation between religion and philosophy. It was, as all books of this kind, originally written in Arabic under the name *Aḳida Rafia* (the same meaning as the Hebrew) and later translated into Hebrew several times, the first time by Samuel Motot in 1392. It is his translation which was ultimately printed, but the title was slightly changed.

The book was written at the request of a friend, who asked Ibn Daud to enlighten him on the problem of free will and determination. The author felt that the problem could not have been treated properly, unless the entire subject of Jewish religious philosophy be taken up, for this problem is only a link in a chain. And as the previous books on the subject were not sufficient for the purpose, he found it necessary to compose one of his own. He mentions only two previous books on philosophy, Saadia's Emunoth and Gabirol's Fountain of Life. The first he praises highly, but says that he is too brief and does not deal clearly and sufficiently with the problem of freedom. The second he blames exceedingly, both for the erroneousness of the theory and for its failing to deal with Jewish matters.

His own book, he divides into three parts, the first, dealing with the principles of philosophy, including both physics and metaphysics, the second, with the principles of religion as they are based upon and compatible with philosophy, the third, with the cure of the soul, or with ethics. Ibn Daud is the first Jewish philosopher who can be called a close follower of Aristotle and his arguments bear the philosophic stamp in both content and form. His method is clear and lucid except for the difficult Hebrew style of the translator. And while he is anxious as the other Jewish thinkers, to base his arguments on the verses of the Bible, he has not mixed them together as they have done, but first states his view, and then in a separate section to each chapter, he quotes the Biblical verses which in his interpretation substantiates his view.

The first part contains eight chapters. The first is devoted to a definition of substance and accident where substance is defined in the usual Mediæval way, as that which needs no other subject for its existence, and accident as that which is found in something else. The nine categories embracing all kinds of accidents are then given and explained. The second chapter is devoted to the elucidation of substance. Substance is composed of matter and form. But in these we must also discern different stages, namely, the primal matter, which is called the hylean which is mere potentiality to become everything, and matter in general which possesses already a form, the primal form, namely, extension. This general matter, or rather, corporeality, is the fundamental matter of the four elements which after that assumes all forms. He believes that God first created the primal matter, the hylean, and then endowed it with the primal form of general matter, and then with other forms. But he turns round and says in good Aristotelian manner, that after all what really exists is the individual thing composed of matter and form, and that these distinctions are only in mind, namely, in mind we discern, hylean, general matter and forms, but in reality, in time, they are all one, and creation was also in that way, namely, that of individual things. Creation, then becomes, of course, a more complicated matter which he promises to elucidate in the second part, but he is not very clear on this matter even then. He further posits the existence of pure spiritual substances, pure forms.

The third chapter defines motion in its various forms, and here again, Aristotle is followed inasmuch as motion is defined as a change from the potential to the actual, and any kind of change, even growth, is included under motion. The impossibility of the existence of an infinite in any form is then proven in the fourth chapter. In the following chapter motion is taken up again, and the proposition is proven that all movement ends at the first mover (which is, of course, a synonym for God) who, though being the cause of all movement and change in the universe, is not moved. This is made clear by what was proved in the previous chapter, that no infinite of any kind, not even an infinite chain of causes exists. If the case is so, we must assume that movement stops with the first mover, for otherwise were he likewise moved, we would have then another mover, and so on up to an infinite number, but this is impossible as there is no infinite number of causes. Ibn Daud has in fact already proved the existence of God in this way, but he does not dwell on this matter now as he relegates the subject to the second part.

The sixth and the seventh chapters are devoted to the principles of psychology. The purpose of this psychology is to prove the existence of angels, or mediate forces between God and the world. He begins with a definition of the soul in general and describes it to be the perfection of natural body, but not of all kinds of bodies, only of such that are organic. He then tries to prove that the soul, though having its seat in a body, is yet a substance and not an accident. He thus gains his point that there are incorporeal substances, in other words, pure forms without matter, and thus we may assume the existence of angels and mediate spiritual forces. This is followed by a description of the parts of the soul or rather kinds of souls, which is the usual one, namely, there is the lower, or vegetative soul, the animal soul, and the human soul, or reason. Ibn Daud gives a detailed description of the functions of each part, discussing at length the senses, and the faculties of memory and perception, displaying great skill in the mastery of the principles of science. The main problem, however, is the nature of the peculiarly human soul, that is, the highest element of the soul, reason. For a man like Ibn Daud who wanted to hold the rope at both ends, to follow Aristotle and yet preserve every principle of the Torah, the question of the soul presented great difficulty. He could not well accept the Platonic doctrine of pre-existent souls to which his definition of the soul as a substance is leading to, for the Bible speaks of the creation of a soul. He therefore propounds a complicated theory, which is, that the soul has existence prior to the body, but only potentially. This means that the angels or mediate beings who move the world pour their influence, upon the body, or endow it with form, and thus the soul begins its course of development during life. The more it develops, the more power and perfection it acquires. This acquisition is called the acquired reason. And it is this acquired reason which on becoming perfected becomes a more complete substance and being directly connected with the active reason of the world remains immortal. Ibn Daud recognizes degrees in the perfection of the soul, for there are different classes of men, the highest of which is the prophet, yet he does not deny immortality to any man.

With an exposition of the theory of the spheres, which says, that they are of a higher kind of bodies and have souls, and that they influence the events in this world, the first part closes.

The second part is devoted to the principles of religion. It is divided into sections arranged according to six expositions, or six principles of religion, or dogmas, which expositions are again subdivided into chapters. The principles or dogmas are (*1*) existence of God, (2) His unity, (*3*) His attributes, (*4*) His actions, or the inherent relation between him and the order of the universe, (5) Belief in prophecy and tradition, (6) Providence and free will.

In the introduction to this part, Ibn Daud emphasizes the importance of theology, that this is the highest science and is the perfection of man. He then proceeds to prove and expound the principles. As for the first, i. e. the existence of God, he proves it from the premises already established by him in the first part. There must be a first mover which is not moved, for otherwise there would be an infinite number of movers and this is impossible. There is also another proof along the same line, but too complicated to reproduce. His proofs are presented in very logical and lucid form.

The exposition of unity comprises three chapters. The first proves His simplicity, that is there is no composition in His essence for He is incorporeal, and therefore not composed. The second proves the numerical unity, i. e. one God, in the manner of Saadia, for were there two Gods they would have to be somewhat alike and somewhat different. Hence they would be composite, namely, of an element of likeness and an element of difference which is contrary to the conception of God. The third chapter emphasizes the uniqueness of God, that His unity can only be conceived in a negative sense, namely, that He is unlike all other beings.

The third exposition is devoted to the atributes of God. He enumerates eight attributes which are: one, existent, true, external, living, knowing, willing, and potent. He realizes that some are superfluous, for living is included in knowing and willing, as one who knows and wills lives, but he says that it is best to be popular, and not strictly logical. But he devotes much space to their explanation and says that whatever these attributes may mean in themselves, to us they have only a negative meaning.

The fourth exposition contains three chapters. The first proves the existence of angels from the conception of the human souls, which is that the soul is not a corporeal substance. It follows, then, that since the soul is constantly influenced by some powers that these powers should be simple incorporeal substances, and these are the angels, or intelligibles in the terminology of the philosophers. The second proves the same hypothesis from the movement of the spheres. The third gives a résumé of the arising of the universe according to philosophers. It is rather a long exposition of the theory of the world of the Arabic philosophers—with a good deal of Neo-Platonic coloring. The gist of it is that from the *One,* there emanated first a force, which, he says, the philosophers call reason, but *we* will call angel; from this first angel there emanated another one from whom in turn emanated a third one, and so on. The last intelligible is called active reason. These constitute the world of the intelligibles or angels; next comes the world of the spheres, and finally the lower world where things rise and perish. Ibn Daud is a bit doubtful about the theory of emanation, but he believes in the existence of the three worlds, and the mediacy of the intelligibles and their constant influence in life.

He then comes to prophecy, defining it as the rise of the soul to a higher plane where it communicates with the intelligibles and then indirectly with God. There are various degrees to it, visions in dreams and visions in a wakeful state. He also emphasizes the necessity of the prophet possessing the highest ethical qualities. Moses was perfect in this regard, hence he is the father of prophecy. In the second chapter of the fifth exposition, he takes up the immutability of the Torah and the verity of the oral tradition. There he defends the Bible and the tradition both from the attacks of the Christians and the Karaites. In his defense, he makes use of the argument of general agreement which we have noted in Halevi.

In the sixth exposition, he comes to the aim of his book, namely, the problem of Providence, freedom, and God's foreknowledge of things. His theory of mediate forces has facilitated much. The great things, such as creation and others, came directly from God, the other things which are renewed in this world, i. e. all happenings, come through mediates—called angels or intelligibles. Of the new things in this world is also prophecy. As for the God's knowledge of things he confesses that it is a mystery how He can know things—and yet remain simple without the knowledge adding something to His essence. Man is free and has the power to overcome the evil inclination. The struggle to overcome it determines the value of the good act. He also produces the theory of fourfold kind of causality, i. e. Divine, natural, chance-wise, and elective, which was noticed in Halevi—whether he borrowed it from him or not is a moot question. As to the foreknowledge of God, he says that He knows only that certain actions will be presented to the human choice, but not which way he will choose. Ibn Daud is especially helped by the theory of mediates, saying that so many things happen and are accomplished in the world, not directly by God, but through the agency of the intelligibles. He also introduced a scale of Providence, saying that the one who strives more in the knowledge of God and the principles of reason is especially looked after, a theory which Maimonides later developed.

He then comes to the third part—the Ethics. It is rather brief. Practical philosophy aims at happiness, this can be obtained (*1*) by personal morality, (2) family conduct, (*3*) political or social laws. As for the principle of personal morality, he finds it—being influenced by Plato and Aristotle—in the equal and proportionate exercise of the functions of the soul. He finds this principle as well as the principles of the other means of happiness, i. e. right conduct of family and state, embodied in the Torah. The Torah consists of five parts, (*1*) precepts concerning theology; (2) ethics; (*3*) conduct of family; (*4*) conduct of society; (5) and precepts for which we have no reason. The first four parts agree with reason and philosophy and are of prime importance. The fifth part, though we do not understand it, still claims our duty in no less degree. With special emphasis on the value of belief and a picture of the pious man, the book which gave an impetus to Jewish philosophy in the Aristotelian direction, closes.

173. MOSES BEN MAIMON

Moses ben Maimon, or as he is commonly known, Maimonides, can be quite safely spoken of as *the Jewish philosopher*. From the time of the appearance of his philosophic Magnum Opus, *More Nebuḳim* (The Guide of the Perplexed), he has dominated Jewish thought, and no subsequent Jewish thinker can be properly estimated without relating him somewhat to Maimonides. But he is even more than that, his philosophy is practically the complete systematic résumé of the entire philosophic process, which was going on in Jewry from the time of Saadia to his day. And not only in the Jewish world was Maimonides known as the great philosopher, but also in the non-Jewish world has he passed as the representative of Jewish thought.

The work was originally written (1190) in Arabic under the title Dalälat Al-Haïrin, but was soon translated into Hebrew in the year 1200, only ten years after its appearance, by Samuel Ibn Tibbon of Lunel under the title, *More Nebukim,* the one chosen by Maimonides himself with whom Samuel corresponded. It was immediately translated again by the famous poet Judah Al-Harisi (see Ch. IX). Harisi's translation, though surpassing Ibn Tibbon's in clearness and beauty of style, yet falls behind it in exactness, and hence it receded in the background, and the former became the adopted version and was printed many times. At the beginning of the last century, a Hebrew scholar, Mendel Levin, retranslated the first part of Ibn Tibbon's version into Mishnaic Hebrew.

The *Guide of the Perplexed* made its entry in the non-Jewish world almost simultaneously with that in the Jewish world. Yet in the lifetime of Maimonides, parts of the book were transcribed into Arabic characters and studied by Mohammedan theologians. The Christian world did not lag behind and, as early as the first quarter of the thirteenth century, a Latin translation of the Guide was circulated and since then several other Latin translations were made, one of which was by the famous scholar, Johannes Buxtorf Junior, which appeared in print in 1629. Peter of Toledo translated the book into Spanish in 1419, and a Jewish scholar Amades (Jededia) ben Moses into Italian in 1581. During the nineteenth century, it was translated into almost all European languages, the most distinguished translations being those of Solomon Munk's into French and Michael Friedlander's into English.

The *More Nebukim* was assiduously studied by the thinkers of the ages, both Jews and non-Jews, and was consequently, the object of numerous commentaries. There are more than thirty commentaries on it in Hebrew by known authors, and a large number of anonymous ones, the latest Hebrew commentaries being that of the philosopher Solomon Maimon (1791) to Part I, and that of Isaac Satnow to Parts II and III. Of non-Jewish commentaries we know of one to the first chapters of the second part by an Arabic scholar, Abu Bekr Al-Tabrizi (13th century), and scattered comments and notes by the famous German philosopher, Leibnitz. Quotations from the book are found almost in the works of all scholastics, especially in those of the two greatest of them, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.

The *More Nebukim* was composed at the request of the favorite disciple of Maimonides, Joseph Ibn Aknin, who begged his master to explain the *Sodoth,* or esoteric ideas of the Bible, to treat of metaphysical problems and to expound the theories of the Kalam, i. e. the Arabic Orthodox philosophy. Maimonides undertook to do all this and added another subject, the explanation of the anthropomorphisms of the Bible, namely, all terms applied to God in the Bible which speak of Him in human terms. Logically, then, the book contains four parts: (*1*) On the removal of anthropomorphisms from God, including the theory of attributes; (*2*) The theory of the Kalam; (*3*) God and His relation to the universe; (*4*) Esoteric ideas of the Bible, namely, prophecy, Maase Bereshith, i. e. the History of Creation (Gen. Chs. I–IV) and Maase Merkabah, description of the Divine Chariot (Ezekiel Chs. I, X). Technically, the book is divided into three parts. Part I treats of the first two subjects, Part II and seven chapters of Part III of the other two. The last forty-seven chapters of the third part can be considered as an appendix to the original plan but they contain discussions of important problems such as the existence of evil in the world, omnipresence of God and Providence, freedom of the will, purpose of nature, the rationality of the precepts of the Torah, and finally the true way of worshipping God. All these discussions complete the theories of Maimonides and weld them into a system of Jewish religious philosophy.

The More Nebukim, as Maimonides himself asserts several times, in his letters to his disciple, Joseph Ibn Aknin, and in the book itself (I, 68), was written neither for accomplished philosophers nor for those who never studied philosophy, but for a limited circle of students who did study philosophy and were acquainted with its principles, but were baffled by certain problems which seem to indicate a contradiction between religion and philosophy. Chief of these problems was the difficulty presented by the language of the Bible in speaking of God. They also wanted to know more about the religious philosophy itself and the deeper problems of metaphysics. It is for the purpose of removing the difficulties of these perplexed students, as well as to give them further instruction, that the book was written.

It is this purpose underlying the book which determined its character and arrangement and which explains many aberrations from a thorough systematic order, one which we might have expected from a great systematizer like Maimonides. Thus, for instance, we might have expected him to begin, like most previous Jewish philosophers, with the proofs for the existence of God, follow up with the theory of attributes and then explain briefly the anthropomorphisms of the Bible. But he has not done so. He devoted almost the entire first part to the last two subjects and produces the proofs for the existence of God only in the second part. It is also for this reason that Maimonides does not discuss the theory of knowledge, nor busy himself with other psychological data which should have been included in a complete philosophic system. But Maimonides was speaking to a circle who were acquainted with all these data, who were philosophically trained believers, but who had difficulties in the conception of God.

The first object therefore was to clear these difficulties and elicit a pure conception of God. It is only then that he could proceed to the treatment of the philosophical problems.

The great contribution of Maimonides consists not so much in the originality of his ideas, though there is much to that, but in the thoroughness with which he treated his problems, and the criticism of the ideas of other people. The circle to which he spoke were well aware of the fact that the Bible uses metaphors and similes, but they wanted to have a detailed exposition of the application of the principles to the various terms and a complete theory. Maimonides certainly gratified their wish, for in forty-seven chapters of the first part, he takes up every conceivable term applied to God in the Bible, whether it is a noun, denoting an acquisition, or a verb signifying an action or an affection, and explains it thoroughly and completely. The chapters on the anthropomorphisms are therefore a masterly exposition of the entire subject. We can not however follow him in the winding course of his system and will have to be satisfied with a brief exposition of his philosophy.

In his proofs for the existence of God, Maimonides differs in method from that of all Jewish philosophers before him, with the exception of Ibn Daud. They all proved the existence of God from the fact that the world is created and hence there is a creator. He, on the other hand, asserts vigorously that the existence of God is not dependent on the question whether the world is eternal or created. Creation is a question by itself which has to stand on its own merits. He therefore proves the existence of God as one who is the principle of all being and its ground, and in this he follows Aristotle entirely. He produces his proofs at great length by positing 26 propositions taken from Aristotle's physics and metaphysics. With the help of these propositions, he proves that there exists a prime mover, one who is necessary of existence. In this proof the idea of an impossibility of an infinite series of causes forms the main element. He also produces three more proofs for the existence of God. The oneness and incorporeality follow from the conception of the prime mover, or the Being necessary of existence. Were He corporeal, He would be moved while moving the world, for this is the law of bodies as demonstrated in one of the propositions (9), and then He would require a cause for His being, and so on to infinity, but this is impossible. He is One for a number of reasons, one of them has been quoted by us before, and that is that there could not be two Gods, for then they would have both difference and likeness, which would mean that they are composite and hence no Gods. He also points to the harmony of the universe as bearing evidence to one God.

As for the attributes of God, Maimonides has dealt with them, as pointed out, in the first part of the book at length (Chs. LI–LXI) and in a most thorough manner. After criticizing the theories of some of the predecessors who asserted the possibility of ascribing positive essential attributes of God, namely, that we can speak of God in attributes which express His essence, he says that it is true that we have to accept four attributes, living, potent, wise, and willing, but they are entirely negative. The only positive knowledge we have of God is that He exists. The other attributes mentioned merely means that we assert that the opposite of the quality signified by each one is denied of Him, such as potent means that He has no impotence, etc. In this question as in all others, it is the thoroughness and clearness of conception which are his chief contribution.

The problem which occupies the mind of Maimonides next to the existence of God and the purity of His conception, is the creation of the world. He subjects first the theory of Aristotle of the eternity of the world, as well as the Platonic opinion of the existence of chaos, and the Neo-Platonic theories of emanation, to a strict criticism, but while he is mild regarding the last two theories, he is more severe against the former for it is the Aristotelian philosophy which appeals to him. The gist of his criticism against the eternity of the world is, that it was never fully and satisfactorily established by Aristotle, for his arguments for it are drawn from the order of the existing world and its laws, and it can not be shown that these laws also hold good for a world which is only coming into being. And if the case is so, as long as there is no certainty to the theory of eternity of the world, he will rather accept the Biblical theory of creation from nothing, although he admits that he can not solve the difficulties connected with it.

The creation of the world involves a number of problems. First of all, the problem of the world order itself. He accepts the existence of Intelligibles as mediators between God and the world which he, like Ibn Daud calls angels, but he differs from the former in a number of points. As usual, he takes the matter up in detail and interprets the verses connected with such matters. The second problem is how to explain the process of creation as expressed in the Bible. This is one of the *Sodoth,* estoteric doctrines, an explanation of which was asked by Ibn Aknin. The explanation of Maase Bereshith completes the question of the creation of the world. But this in turn, leads to the question of the truth and veracity of the Torah, for creation has been assumed on the strength of it, and not because of any philosophic proof. Hence, Maimonides takes up the problem of prophecy, the means of revelation of the Torah and truth.

Maimonides treats prophecy with a deep psychological insight and in a thorough manner (Part II, Chs. XXXII–XLII). There are, he says, two opinions of prophecy, one a popular one which claims it to be entirely dependent upon the will of God, namely, that even the most common man can become a prophet if God wills so. The other, a more philosophical one, which makes prophecy entirely dependent upon the disposition of the soul of man, and asserts it to be an expression of the highest perfection of a man properly prepared by his ethical conduct and intellectual attainment. Both of these theories, says he, are not true. Prophecy combines both conditions, proper preparation of man and the influence of Divine spirit. The would-be prophet must possess great intellectual ability, a rich phantasy, and perfect ethical conduct. But even then he may not become a prophet if God does not *pour* over him His spirit. He cites the example of Baruch Ben Neriah, the disciple of Jeremiah who in spite of all his strivings for the coveted gift never attained it. The influence of the Divine Spirit affects the reasoning powers of the prophet and through these his imagination, and thus the prophecy is visualized and uttered. He shows the various degrees of prophecy, eleven in all, which are designated in the Bible by various means of prophecy, as dreams, visions, voices, appearances of angels, the voice of God, and other means.

But above all these kinds of prophecy stands the prophecy of Moses which is of a *sui generis* nature. Moses, who differed from all men in his wonderful deeds, differed also in his attainments. He was the acme of perfection, subdued all earthly and corporeal inclinations and rose to the very height of spirit. His prophetic inspiration is therefore different from that of the other prophets *in kind,* not only in degree. He reached direct communion with the Divine, and the immediate truth revealed to him is embodied in the Torah which he gave to Israel. Maimonides asserts that only the first two commandments were heard by the Jews at Sinai from God alone through the mediacy of a created voice, but the rest of the commandments and entire Torah were communicated by Moses. The Torah therefore is a revelation and direct influence of Divine Spirit. It is the expression of both the highest truth and Divine wisdom. It is, therefore, immutable and its laws hold good for all time.

After completing his exposition of prophecy, proving thereby the verity of revelation and enhancing the validity of the Torah, he fulfills his promise to his pupil and takes up another phase of the *Sodoth,* esoteric teachings of the Bible, namely, the *Maase Merkabah,* the chariot vision of Ezekiel. This occupies the first seven chapters of the third part. The original plan of his book is thus completed, but his system evolves the discussion of more problems to which he devotes the rest of Part III.

The first problem which presents itself as relating to the order of the world is the question of evil in it. If the world is a creation of the All-Good and Wise, how comes it that there is so much evil on this earth? This age-old problem Maimonides tries to solve by saying that evil is really not a positive thing but a negative, namely, a lack of good. If the case is so, evil is not a Divine creation. It really arises from the deficiency of matter which is unable to receive all the Divine good, and is by nature changeable and destructible. Hence, death, sickness, suffering, and even passion, and foolishness all arise as consequences of the mutability of matter of which the body is composed. The world, however, could not be created otherwise, for the generation of one individual necessitates the decay of another. In this way it can be said, the mutability of matter is good in itself, but mutability presupposes decay and death, so that these very things are conditions of existence, which in its totality is good.

But one may ask, "Is not evil more predominating in the world than good? How then could a good God create such a world where there is more evil than good?" To this, our philosopher answers, that the case is not so. There are three kinds of evil, says he, one arising from natural phenomena which are due to the very nature of matter, such as earthquakes, storms, lightning, etc. But these, he says, happen so seldom, and if we draw a balance of the good and evil that is found in the order of nature, we will find that the good exceeds that of evil. The other two, are those that happen to men by their fellow-men such as by war and other means of violence, and those that happen to men by their own conduct. Both evils can be remedied by men themselves and can not be attributed to God. Maimonides was thus able to save God from being the direct author of evil, but the problem as a whole is not solved. We still have to consider the course of events in this world, is it all chance, or is there Divine Providence ordering them. And this brings him to the problems of Providence and the order of nature, and God's foreknowledge of things and freedom.

To these problems, nine chapters are devoted (Part III, Chs. XVII–XXV). Maimonides first states four different theories regarding Providence, all of which are insufficent, and then offers his own, which he believes is that of Judaism. Man is free in his actions, otherwise all religion and ethics would be unthinkable. It is true that some men may be, by nature and temperament, more inclined towards doing good than others, but all have the possibility to overcome their inclinations by training themselves to follow in the right direction. Man is therefore judged according to his actions.

The world is conducted by God's Providence, but there is a great distinction between other living things and the human genus. As far as the other things are concerned, Providence extends only to the preservation of the genera, but the individuals are left to natural law and chance. But as for man, each individual of the genus is under Divine Providence. Yet, there is a distinction even there, Providence in the human genus is also graded. The one who is intellectually developed, and who is more able to suppress his corporeal passions is in closer touch with the Divine influence, and is the recipient of the greater degree of Providence.

The problem of God's foreknowledge is solved by Maimonides more in a mystic way and is connected with his theory of attributes which says that we can not really know them. His knowledge is so different from ours that the laws applying to our knowledge do not apply to His. Hence, He knows everything from eternity, and His essence is not increased by this knowledge, nor does His knowledge of the human way of acting affect in any way the freedom of man. A similar mystic strain is also noted in his treatment of the problem of injustice, namely, why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? in other words the problem of Job. He at first attempts to adopt some of the more common theories propounded in the Book of Job, namely, that the righteous is only apparently righteous but in reality he sinned or that punishment befalls a man as a trial and then his reward is increased, or that the good and evil befalling men are also apparent and not real. Finally, he confesses that the real answer is, that we do not know the nature of Divine Providence. It is totally different from our own conception of it. He adds, however, one more point and that is that real happiness of man consists in his perfection, namely, the knowledge of God, and the higher a man reaches in that, the more happy he is, so that material benefits dwindle into insignificance. And it is to this high point that Job ultimately reached after he heard the speech of God.

In direct relation with his theory of graded Providence stand his theories of immortality and the purpose of man's life. The soul according to him is not originally a substance but a potential power given to man. When through effort and diligence man develops this potential power, it acquires separate existence, it becomes the acquired reason. This acquired reason is immortal. The power which brings about this realization from the potential reason to the actual is the influence of the active reason of the universe, one of the Intelligibles. By his moral and intellectual perfection, man shows his relation to the active reason and transforms his soul into an immaterial immortal substance. This then is the purpose of man's existence, to rise higher into intellectual heights.

From the discussion of the purpose of man's life, Maimonides goes over to a detailed exposition of the reasons and principles underlying the Torah and its precepts. He believes that the Torah is the very means for the attainment of that aim to which man strives. Its purpose is a double one, that is, to improve the body of the individual as well as the body politic, and to improve the soul. He divided the precepts of the Torah into fourteen classes and shows the reasonable purpose underlying most of them except some classes for which no human reason can be found. He believes, however, that even these laws were arranged by Divine wisdom.

This great work is closed by a picture of the true life ideal of the religious man. That ideal consists in attaining intellectual truth, or in other words, to know God in the fullest sense of the word. Ethical perfection is a necessary means for this attainment, but the aim is Divine contemplation.

B. Ethics

174. IBN GABIROL

In view of the fact that one of the principal aims of Jewish philosophy is the evolving of an ethical way of life, the line of demarcation between it and ethics proper is not distinctly drawn. Hence, we have in reality few books which deal wholly with ethics, from a philosophical point of view. Most of the Jewish philosophers have included their ethics in their metaphysical and theological writings, and what is left for the historian to do is to distinguish the ethical teaching from the other elements with which it is intertwined.

Yet, there are several books which deal primarily with ethics. The first of these is, *The Improvement of the Moral Qualities* (Heb. Tikkun Midoth ha-Nefesh), by Solomon Ibn Gabirol. It was originally written in Arabic and was later translated into Hebrew by Judah Ibn Tibbon. It is the only ethical book written by a Jewish philosopher, where an attempt is made to systematize the principles of ethics independently of religious belief, but merely on psychological and physiological principles. It was intended to be a popular manual to guide people in the conduct of their everyday life. It seems, however, that it was not completed in the way the author meant to expound his principles.

The book consists of an introduction and five sections, each containing four chapters. In the introduction the author lays down the following principles: The soul consists of two elements, a higher and a lower one. The higher one is an emanation from God and strives for reunion with its source. The lower one, connected with the physical senses, is the seat of the moral qualities which we employ in our daily life. This part of the soul can be cultivated, and it is the degree of cultivation which constitutes the difference between man and man. The purpose of the book then is to teach the cultivation of the soul.

The qualities of the soul, says Gabirol, are manifested through the five senses, and to each sense he ascribes four qualities, which, he says, correspond to the four elements in nature, namely, air, fire, water, and earth. All together he finds twenty qualities in the human soul which he classifies in the following table:

Sense of:

sight	*hearing*	*smell*	*taste*	*touch*
pride	love	anger	joy	parsimony
meekness	hatred	will	grief	generosity
pudency	mercy	jealousy	peace	courage
impudence	cruelty	diligence	remorse	cowardice

Gabirol promises in the introduction to explain in detail his scheme of division of the qualities and why he subsumed them under the respective senses. But he fails to carry out his promise, and we really lack the psychological and physiological reasons. We are, therefore, often at a loss to understand why such and such a quality should be assigned to this sense and to no other. In the twenty chapters that follow the introduction, where each quality is discussed, some explanations are offered for this classification, but few are satisfactory. The connection of the qualities with the senses are often based on a verse in the Bible, and often on general assumption. Thus, the qualities ranged under the sense of sight, are done so, first because the eye indicates the attitude of the man, whether he is proud or meek, or bashful, or impudent, and secondly, because the Bible often expresses pride by the phrase "One who has his eyes on high" (Geva eynaim., Ps. CI, 5). As for grouping love, hatred, mercy and cruelty under the sense of hearing, it seems to be based on the verses of the Bible (Deut. Ch. VI, 4–5) where it is said: "Hear, O Israel: God our Lord is one God. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy substance." In this we see that love, the fundamental quality of the group, is intimately connected with the sense of hearing. The other qualities are merely either opposites of love or modifications of it. We must also note that the love spoken of by Gabirol here, is primarily love to fellow man, which is really connected more with hearing than with sight, for when we hear one praised and spoken well of, we may come to love him. The same can be said about the other qualities of the group. Of the four qualities subsumed under the sense of smell only two, those of anger and jealousy, can be explained by the Biblical expression which often represents anger as a kindling of the nostrils. The very word for anger, *aph,* means both anger and nose. Jealousy is only a species of anger. It is difficult, however, to see how will and diligence can be connected with that sense.

Those qualities which, according to Gabirol, belong to the quality of taste, are placed by him so only because taste seems to him to be synonymous with pleasure, and pleasure, or the denial of it, is the fundamental trait of all these qualities. It is, at the first glance, difficult to see how remorse or penitence can be related to taste, but considering that each of these qualities brings about a diminishing of pleasure its relation becomes clear. The classifying of liberality, parsimony, valor and cowardice under the sense of touch is based on symbolism. The hand, the main organ of touch, symbolizes both giving and striking, both external expressions of liberality and valor, while the other two qualities are merely the opposites of the former qualities.

The scheme of classification of the qualities, on the whole, can be pronounced as unsatisfactory, but as an attempt to reduce the virtues to physiological and psychological elements it is important. More important, however, is the discussion of each quality contained in the twenty chapters, where keen analysis of their nature and character is displayed. In general, moderation in the use of each quality is counseled, and insistence on the values of training and control of the senses is repeatedly made. Here and there, deep psychological insight is shown. One such remark deserves to be quoted. Grief, says Gabirol, arises from the fact that a man fails to realize his wishes and desires. He therefore, counsels man to desire less and consequently the disappointment will be less keen. Moreover, let the man, he says, imagine beforehand that he may fail in his ambitions, and when that really occurs the failure will be less grievous. This advice has the background of psychology and experience, and does by no means undermine self-reliance. It merely supplies a safety valve for disappointment by imagining its possibility beforehand.

Gabirol uses copious quotations for his ethical teachings from the Bible and from the rich Arabic proverb literature.

175. BAHYA

The second great ethical work, which really exceeds by far that of Gabirol, is the one of Bahya—The Duties of the Heart. We already discussed its first section dealing with metaphysics. But the book is primarily an ethical one, as nine tenths of it are devoted to teach the conduct of life and to the inculcation of piety and fear of God. It teaches pure ethics, based on the principles of Jewish religion.

The principal thesis underlying Bahya's system of ethics is, that thankfulness to God for his creating this wonderful world, in His infinite wisdom, is the source of all ethical duties. He therefore, devotes his second section or portal, as he calls it, to a description and examination of the manifestation of Divine Wisdom in the various kinds of creation, in the universe as a whole, and in the kinds of creatures. "Divine Wisdom," says Bahya, "is one, but it is differently manifested, like the sun which is one but its rays are reflected in different colors, when they pass through white, red or black panes of glass." He then describes in detail the order of the inanimate world, then various kinds of animals, then the body of man and finally the soul and its activities. This examination shows not only the greatness of God but His infinite goodness. Hence, Bahya shows in the third section, which he calls, *The Worship of God,* how grateful man should feel towards God and how it devolves upon him to willingly submit to His Worship and follow the Divine precepts which are the hygiene of the soul. Bahya examines the various forms of thankfulness, which man may feel towards his benefactors, and finds that the one we feel towards God is the purest, for His goodness is without blemish, as He can not have any possible ulterior motive. One point in this analysis is worth while quoting. In speaking of the kindness shown by the charitable man towards the unfortunate recipient, Bahya remarks, that it contains an egoistic element, for the man who gives the charity intends by it to assuage his own pain which he experiences at the sight of suffering. This analysis of sympathy is very keen, and closely resembles the one made, centuries later, by the Scottish philosopher and economist, Adam Smith, in his book on *The Moral Sentiment.* Bahya carries his rationalism into his ethics, and in describing the nature and character of the worship of God, he insists that it shall be based not on the expectation of reward, but on reason, namely, it shall be such a worship which emanates from a deep contemplation of the sublimity of God, and which fills the soul with awe and with a desire to unite with Him. The section on *The Worship of God* is wound up with a chapter on the various qualities of the soul which can be employed in the worship of God, and the list of these qualities is almost identical, both in number and kind, to those contained in the table of Gabirol.

The next section deals with the trust in God (Shaar Habitochon). Bahya analyzes, in a keen and detailed manner, the subjective and objective aspects of trust, and describes the proper conduct of man in regard to this trust in God, namely, that it must not lead to neglect of occupation, but that he must endeavor to do all that he can in order to earn his livelihood, and then leave the rest to God. Real trust in God brings man to a happy state of mind, accepting all vicissitudes of life in a cheerful mood. This is followed up by a section, on *Devoting Human Actions to the Name of God,* its principal thesis being, that whatever man does in worshipping God must be only for the sake of doing His will and for no other motive. He then launches upon a lengthy discussion of how such attitude can be attained. He describes the obstacles in the way of its attainment, the chief of which is the allurement of the desire of worldly things. This brings him to a classification of virtues and evil inclinations. He finds that of all such inclinations pride is the most harmful, while meekness is the most desirable virtue.

To the description of meekness (anavah) the next section (the sixth) is devoted. In it, this virtue is described in all its details, especially in relation to God. As in all other portions in the book, Bahya here too introduces his rational element and explains that meekness must not be a mere slavish humility, but is to be based on knowledge of self and God. This meekness must be manifested in all ways of life, in dealings with all kinds of men, and in relation to God. Meekness brings to penitence, and hence the section on penitence follows, wherein penitence, its nature, character and requirements are described. Penitence in turn leads to self-examination (cheshbon ha-Nefesh) which is the subject of the eighth section. Bahya goes into this subject at length, and gives a minute description of the various forms of examination to which a man should subject his soul. Their number is thirty. He finally gives us a beautiful illustration of the use of this scrutiny. Suppose, he says, you are in a place where there is a beautiful picture hanging behind you, and for some reason you can not see it with your eyes, even if you turn around. You then take an iron tablet, burnish it and polish it with all kinds of oils until it is bright, and place it opposite the wall on which the picture hangs. The image of the picture will of course be reflected in that tablet. Likewise, he says, the Divine Wisdom is the picture, the soul is the tablet, but the reflection of the former can be seen in the latter only after it has been burnished by moral conduct and polished by the examinations and investigations which were mentioned.

As one of the forms of examination of the soul, was the practicing of a certain kind of asceticism, Bahya takes up this question in the next section (ninth). In no way does he advise forsaking the interests of this world; on the contrary, he urges the people to participate in all activities of life. He only asks for the control of the reason over the passions. This is the kind of self-restraint that he preaches for the average man. For the more pious ones, he advises a mental separation from the allurements of the world, though they too should participate in all matters of life. Finally, he comes (tenth section) to the crown of virtues, the love of God. This love he defines as the strongest longing of the soul for the Creator and striving to unite with the higher light. This love is to be unlimited, and man must be ready to sacrifice for His sake, wealth, limb and life. He believes, however, that only very few are able to reach the highest degree, i. e. the ability to sacrifice life for His sake, but almost everyone is able to sacrifice wealth and limb, if he is only properly trained. And the way to attain that love of God is to pass all the preliminary steps enumerated by our author, namely, to understand His unity, His wisdom, worship Him, be meek and penitent, examine the soul and to practice self-restraint. Only after going through all these steps, man will reach to the highest point—love of God, which will fill his soul and penetrate his whole being.

176. THE BOOK OF THE PIOUS

The ethical literature heretofore discussed, was the product of the Spanish Jewry where *philosophy* was dominant, and all literary endeavor outside of Halakah was tinged with its spirit. But the great Franco-German Jewry, where Jewish life was carried on with a unique intensity, and piety was the goal and ideal of life, also produced its ethical books, which, though they may lack the philosophical background and the logical sequence, nevertheless display deep ethical sentiment and reach a high moral altitude seldom equaled by ethical literature. The typical and classical book of this literature is, *The Book of the Pious* (Sepher Hassidim) ascribed to Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg (c. 1200).

The book, as we possess it, seems to be a composite work, consisting of several books that originally bore the same title, Book of the Pious, or similar to that. The first 162 sections comprise more likely the original book composed by Judah the Pious (hassid); sections 162–469 have been incorporated from another book by the same name. The sections 469–1028 are additions by the same compiler. Sections 1029–1173 constitute the third part and bear the inscription "transcribed from another book of the pious." All these things show us that there were many manuals of ethics and piety current in the twelfth century, which often bore the name, Books of the Pious, but the most important of them was the one by Judah. A later ethical compiler took the book of Judah and added parts from the others, and in this enlarged form, our book was handed down to the generations.

The book, as a whole, is of a practical nature, no ethical theories are taught there. It was unnecessary, as it is all based on the ethical teachings of the Talmud and Agadic literature, and permeated with the deep religiosity of life. What it does contain is a detailed instruction of the conduct of daily life covering practically every part of it. It embraces a multitude of subjects, first of all the conduct of man in relation to God, namely, rules about worship, prayer, penitence, Sabbath observance and other things, then the conduct of man in business, marital life, treatment of servants and animals, relations between Jew and gentile, rules of education, writing and copying of books, even the minutiæ of table manners and other modes of personal conduct are not forgotten.

The book which, as said, contains collections of rules and statements of conduct does not admit of a regular system, but it seems that at least the first part, the one originated by Judah, followed a fairly laid-out plan. It originally contained three sections, the first, dealing with piety, the second, with meekness (anavah) including kindred subjects such as penitence, prayer, abstinence and other things, the third, dealing with the fear of God. In the subsequent compilation the section headings were removed but the original plan is followed. Yet the plan is merely a broad outline, there is really no logical sequence and many subjects are treated in the same sections. The second part, which occupies the bulk of the book from sections 162–1129, is put together without any order or plan, but contains merely rules and statements. The third part is devoted primarily to the events that happen to the soul after death.

The book as a whole reflects very faithfully Jewish life in the Franco-German Jewry, during the thirteenth century, with all its virtues and defects. In it is mirrored the deep piety that permeated all strata of Jews, the great love for Judaism, the longing for the Torah and the sanctity of conduct on the one hand, the gross superstition and crude belief in the supernatural, on the other. The book is full of stories telling of meetings with dead men who wander around in the world as a punishment for their sins, of demons who prowl around at night on their wayward missions, of the attempts of sorcerers and sorceresses to injure men in various ways, and also of advice to counteract their actions. Yet, with all this the moral value of the book is not impaired, for it truly deserves the name the Book of the Pious. We find there not only religious piety but piety of life in general, in the highest degree. It is, as one Jewish scholar remarked,[2] a noble commentary on the verse "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19, 18), and a call to realize it in all ways of life. Some of its dicta equal the best moral utterings of all ages.

Here are some of them:

Speaking of the injunction not to shame your fellow-man, our author tells us, "In case men sit in company and one of them is accused of having committed a wrong act, but the name of the culprit is not given, each one of the company is to confess to that sin in order that the real transgressor shall not be ashamed when he is compelled to confess" (sect. 22). Another case, he admonishes us not to enter with our guests in a learned discussion, unless we are certain of their ability to do so, for otherwise they may be brought to shame (p. 312).

He is especially insistent that men restrain themselves with all their might from causing the least kind of grievance to their fellow-men. As a general injunction he says: "One who caused grievance to another man we consider as if he caused grievance to a whole world, for man is a microcosm" (sect. 411). In another place he tells us not to praise a man before his enemy, as it will annoy the latter.

Regarding the general conduct of men in relation to his equals and subordinates, he says: "Man in conversation must always use his friend's name first, namely, he must say you and I, and not I and you" (sect. 13). Such a manner of speaking inculcates modesty. "A man should rather make friends with a plain ignorant man, who is liberal in money matters and is of a pleasant disposition, than with a scholar who is irascible and parsimonious" (sect. 369). "Give the right counsel to everyone even to thy enemy, and do by no means attempt to mislead him." Here our author displays keen psychology, for he adds: "By giving the right counsel to thine enemy you will really revenge yourself on him. He most likely will think that you, being an enemy, advised him the wrong way and at once will do the opposite" (sect. 134). Of subordinates he says: "Do not insult your servant whether man or maid; if they did what you wanted, do not deny them praise, for ingratitude is the worst quality." "If a man employs several gentile maid servants, he shall not cause any quarrel among them, for that will bring about slander in his house" (sect. 941). "Do not be ungrateful even to a beast, and the riders who stick their spurs in the horses will be punished" (sect. 44).

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[2] Dr. M. Guedemann in his book: Geschichte des Erzihungswesen's und Cultur der abendlandischen juden, Heb. translation, Part I, p. 141.

Love of man in general, whether Jew or gentile, is reflected in the following dicta: "If you see two men whisper do not ask them what they are talking about, as you will cause them to tell you a lie, for were they satisfied that you know of it, they would have told you beforehand" (sect. 1062). "If you have to hire a laborer to do a certain kind of work and there are two candidates and one knows only this work and the other one knows all other work, hire the former" (sect. 1065). A man must deal honestly with Jews and gentiles alike. "If the gentile cheats himself in accounts, the Jew must return the additional amount. If a man is poor, it is better for him that he beg than cheat a gentile" (sect. 661). "If a Jew who is kind-hearted married a kind-hearted proselyte woman, it is better for other Jews to marry their descendants rather than the descendants of pure Jews who lack their virtue" (sect. 377). Such dicta were inculcated and taught, in a time, when the gentile world considered every Jew an outcast, when the Jew was not safe with life and limb, when the church declared every Jew a perpetual enemy. And the Jew on his part retaliated by treating them as equals before the law and morality. Such sayings reflecting pure love of humanity and sanctity of life and conduct could be multiplied by the hundreds. But even the few that were quoted are sufficient to show the height of morality to which German Jewry reached during an age which on the whole was not distinguished by its moral tone.

177. MINOR ETHICAL WORKS

The number of small treatises dealing, wholly or partly, with ethics, written during this period is considerable, but few advance new theories or make contributions to the science of ethics. Several of them, though, deserve to be mentioned, either on account of their intrinsic worth, or because of their author who made himself famous otherwise.

The earliest of such small treatises is *The Reflection of the Soul* (Hegyon ha-Nefesh), by Abraham bar Hiyya, spoken of above (Sect. 166). The three last sections of the book deal with ethics. The subjects discussed are the right way of action, penitence, and the changes in life and the world. On the whole, it contributes little to the ethical theory, and belongs more to homiletics, as it is primarily a collection of several homilies on the prophetical portions (haphtoroth) read on the day of Atonement, namely, Isaiah, Ch. 58, and the book of Jonah. But here and there are found brilliant ethical and philosophical remarks. One of them is his statement that the Ten Commandments really contain all the 613 precepts contained in the Pentateuch. He explains it in the following way. All human activity in the world can be divided into three classes: things which bear on the relation between man and God, between man and his family and between man and his fellow-men. These three kinds of activities are further expressed in three ways, either by mere thought, or by speech, or by real action through the various organs. We have then nine modes which cover all ways of human life.

Turning to the Ten Commandments, we see that after the first commandment which pronounces the existence of God, there follow nine others which fall into three groups corresponding to three classes of human activity. The first group covers all relations between man and God, inasmuch as the second commandment treats of the belief of the mind and heart, the third one of such relations with God which are dependent on speech, and the fourth one, enjoining the observance of the Sabbath, deals with divine worship by action. The second group covers the three ways of relation between man and family, the fifth speaking of honor of parents, which honor is rooted in the thoughts of man, the sixth—thou shalt not murder—refers, according to our author, not merely to actual murder, but also to pronouncing command to your family which brings them injury, and the seventh deals with immoral action within the family circle. In the last group the order is reversed, the eighth commandment refers to stealing, an evil act affecting relations between man and man, the ninth concerning false witness warns against activity expressed by speech, and the tenth, prohibiting covetousness, refers to evil thoughts and desires. Taking in consideration that the Commandments include all kinds of precepts which can be arranged under that tripartite classification, we have then the inclusion of all the precepts contained in the Pentateuch. This observation is rather an ingenious and brilliant one.[3]

A more important ethical work is that of Maimonides called, *The Eight Chapters,* which serves as an introduction to his commentary on Pirke Aboth, the sayings of the Fathers. In this small work, Maimonides develops his ethical theory, though in a succinct but a complete manner. The first chapter is devoted to psychology which is the basis of ethics.

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[3] The classification of the 613 precepts under the heads of the Ten Commandments is not new. It has been already done by Philo, and also by Saadia. It was a favorite exegetic act with the Karaites. The originality of Abraham ben Hyia consists in his explanation how the classification is to be made.

In it, the author asserts the unity of the soul, and takes exception to the current theory that there are several souls, such as the vegetative, animal and rational. It is all one but, of course, it possesses several faculties. These faculties or parts are, according to him, five: the nutritive, sensory and emotional, imaginative, conative (will) and rational. He insists also on the uniqueness of the human soul, for though some faculties such as the nutritive and sensory resemble the same faculties in plants and animals, they are not the same. These faculties in man are distinct and of an entirely different order than those in the plants or animals, and man is nourished by the means of the nutritive faculty which is a part of the human soul, while the donkey is nourished by the nutritive faculty of the asinine soul which is different in kind from that of man. All this is stated, in order that we may be able to understand better the ways of human conduct; for, says Maimonides, the improvement of the qualities of man is the medicine of the soul, and like in the cure of the body, the physician must know its anatomy in order to locate the disease, so in the cure of the soul, its physician must have a knowledge of its parts and make-up for the very same purpose.

After giving a detailed division of the faculties of the soul, the author endeavors in the second chapter to determine those faculties where the virtues and the vices are located. He finds that these have their seat in the faculties of sensation and feeling, and that of will, while the other three faculties have little effect on conduct.

The third chapter is devoted to defining the disease of the soul. The soul, says Maimonides, is healthy when it is so disposed as to perform good deeds, and is sick when it has a contrary disposition. This unhealthy state arises mostly from lack of discernment, namely, the people do not know what is conduct and often think bad action good. It is therefore the duty of the physicians of the soul, i. e. the wise, to cure them and train them to discern between good and bad.

The art of curing the soul is discussed in the fourth chapter which is the most important of the book. In it, Maimonides adopts the Aristotelian criterion for good and bad. It is the famous Via Media, middle way. All actions can be performed in three ways, two extreme ones and one which holds the equilibrium between the two. This is the right and good one. For instance, the art of spending money can be discharged in three ways, one, by spending very sparingly and this is the low extreme—stinginess, the other by spending very recklessly, i. e. spendthriftiness, which is the high extreme, and finally, spending in a generous manner. Generosity, then, is a virtue while stinginess and spendthriftness, both extremes, are vices. The same applies to all other actions. However, the acts are only external expressions of the qualities in the soul proper which are the virtues, and the acquirement of the virtues is the most important thing. This, says Maimonides, can be accomplished by constant repetition of good acts. It is then that it becomes a habit of the soul, and hence the importance of moral training. When, however, bad habits are contracted, the physician is to cure the patient, by inclining him towards the opposite way. As an instance, let us take a man who is inclined towards stinginess. His cure is, that he be forced to spend, for a time, his money lavishly until the inclination for stinginess will be weakened. Then he should be trained to generosity. It must, however, be done carefully, for sometimes the patient may cling to the new vice which is given him as an antidote. With this chapter the practical ethics of Maimonides is closed.

The other chapters deal with the higher aim of human life. That aim is briefly defined by our author, in the fifth chapter, to be the conceiving of God in the highest possible manner. This is in accordance with Maimonides' rationalism which emphasizes philosophic thought as the goal of life. In order to reach that aim man must concentrate all the powers of his soul for that purpose. He must make his daily conduct both physically and morally subservient to this aim. This idea is strengthened by his theory (Ch. VI) that the truly pious is one who has already overcome all inclination to evil and has trained his soul so that it desires only the good. He is higher than the one who struggles with the evil desires and overcomes them. It is to the acquisition of such a state of the soul that a man is to strive.

After discussing in chapter seven the obstacles that lie in the way of one who endeavors to reach the goal, namely, the contemplation of God, he launches in the final chapter upon a long discussion of the problem of human freedom. He first shows that man is free from predisposition—he does not recognize the influence of heredity—and is born with his soul being a *Tabula rasa,* i.e. a blank tablet, on which education can impress either good or bad qualities. He does recognize a certain propensity on the part of man to certain qualities which comes from his physical endowments, but, on the whole, man is free to mold his soul. Next, comes the more difficult problem of compatibility of human freedom with God's ordaining human affairs and his foreknowledge of man's actions. Our author champions freedom in all its phases, and attempts to solve a number of theological problems with more or less success.

The important point in this ethical work is the constant insistence on moral education and on acquiring the habit of right conduct, and especially the training of the moral will.

To the minor ethical works belong also the ethical portions of the codes of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (*The Book of the Rekach*) and of Eliezer of Metz (*The Book of the God Fearing, Yearim*) and a small work by Joseph Ibn Aknin, the favored disciple of Maimonides, written in Arabic, under the name *Tab-Al Nafus,* i.e. *The Medicine of the Soul.*

178. ETHICAL TESTAMENTS AND WILLS

Another species of ethical literature is the ethical testaments and moral wills which pious scholars wrote for their children, at the time they felt that their end was approaching. This form of imparting instruction in the conduct of life is of ancient origins. We have traces of it in the Bible, such as the advice of David to his son Solomon (1 Kings, Ch. II, 1–10), the instructions of Jonadab, son of Rechab (Jeremiah, Ch. XXXV, 6–8), to his children, and others. In Apocryphal literature we have a whole book of ethical testaments: The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (see Ch. I, Sect. 24). In the Talmud we have a number of such short testaments left by Tannaim or Amoraim either to their children or disciples.

As ethical literature begins to develop during the first epoch of the Mediæval period, these wills begin to reappear; this time in a more elaborate and complete form.

The earliest of these wills we possess is one entitled *Orchoth Chaim* (*The Ways of Life*) by Eleazar ben Isaac of Worms (c. 1050), surnamed the Great, the disciple of Rabbi Gershon, written to his son, who is surmised to be Tobiah the compiler of a Midrash to the Pentateuch (see Ch. VI, Sect. 88). The testament reflects the noble piety and high morality of the writer and enchants us with its simplicity and ethical beauty. It covers all relations of life and inculcates love of God, family and fellow-men. The author opens with a short admonition to honor God who is the creator of man, and points out human frailty and the uncertainty of life, saying, "Remember how many have lain down on their beds at night never to rise again, or have risen in pain and sickness." He then enjoins his son to honor scholars and observe the prayers and the morning benedictions, for all these things display our gratitude to God who preserves us in life. A number of paragraphs are then devoted to the honor and respect due to fellow-men. Quoting the saying contained in Aboth (Ch. III, 3) "Despise no man," he adds, "for many pearls are found in the poor man's tunic," referring of course to learning and moral qualities. He then enjoins the son to visit the sick and advises him to enter the sick chamber in a cheerful mood—for the sick person watches the faces of the visitors—to attend funerals and comfort the mourners. Eliezer emphasizes also the duties to gladden the hearts of the bride and groom, to treat the poor kindly and to honor them. Regarding charity he says, "Give it secretly and not in the presence of other people, nor shalt thou look at the poor guest when he is seated at your table, for he may be hungry and swoop on the food ravenously." He further says concerning charity, "My son, prepare provision for thy soul and kindle a lamp to give light before thee. Leave it not to those who come after thee, lest they be unable to kindle it and it be left forever unlit." After speaking of the sanctity of the Sabbath, Eliezer takes up matters of personal conduct, enjoins modesty in all ways of life, prescribes table manners and gives a few rules of hygiene, such as to eat vegetables, not to eat food cooked in a pot which was not used for thirty days, and other things. He then advises not to pursue honor, to keep a secret and not reveal it even to one's wife, not to display anger, and be gentle to friends. He says, "Be not as a fly over thy fellow-man's sore, but cover up thy neighbor's disease and reveal it not to the world." He winds up his instruction by laying down the rule of the golden mean, quoting Eccliesiastes (Ch. V, 16, 17), "Be not righteous overmuch, neither overwicked." He adds, "Nor too shamefaced and yielding, but balance your actions, and often overbalance for the good."

The second work of this character is *"A Father's Admonition"* (Musar Ab) by Judah Ibn Tibbon. It was written to his son, the famous translator, Samuel, about 1190, while Judah went on a journey, and being an old man he expected his end and sent this parting epistle. This testament reflects the character both of the writer and of the recipient. It is written by a man of high culture, a physician and of noble spirit, and the wide reading and extensive knowledge of the writer are traceable in every line. The son, on the other hand, is pictured there as of an impetuous nature and as one not too prone to learning. Yet, taking into consideration the literary accomplishments of Samuel in later years, we must assume, either that the father underestimated him, or that his parting words bore fruit. The work bears a personal character, but the nobility of its teachings and the charm of its style make it a valuable ethical document. On the whole, it is more of a secular nature, though it is permeated by pious sentiments.

Judah begins with extolling the value of the commandment concerning honor to a father, and gently reproaches his son for his errors in the past, tells him of all his endeavors to educate him, of the great library he provided for him and all other means of learning. He therefore exhorts Samuel to continue his studies, both of the Torah and the sciences, especially medicine, and not to neglect them while he is still young before he reaches old age, for "old age is the mother of forgetfulness." He also advises him to acquire the habit of virtue and wisely choose his friends. He then gives rules for literary excellence. He shall make his books his gardens, and pick their flowers, shall write every day at least a page, and read his manuscript twice, write in a beautiful handwriting and observe the rules of grammar; when composing poetry to use the easiest words and the light meter. This is followed by professional advice, namely, to be pleasant to patients—both were physicians—not to take money from poor patients, to inspect the medicines every week, and not to use an herb or medicine of which he has not full knowledge, and finally to take care of his own health. This is followed by admonition for personal conduct, to respect his wife and pay her full honor, for as the Arabic proverb says of women, "None but the honorable honors them, none but the despicable despises them." He continues to urge the son to be economical, take care of the education of his children, continue to study with his teacher and to teach others, to inspect his Hebrew books once a month, and the Arabic ones once in two months and keep them in good order. He shall also lend willingly of his books to others. He winds up by an admonition to honor his teachers, and also his friends, and finally to read the testament once a day. The work is interspersed with beautiful maxims and proverbs and little poems, making it not only useful but also pleasant reading.

The third work of this class, is *The Portals of Instruction,* an ethical testament, ascribed to Maimonides. Its authenticity has been somewhat doubted, but the teachings imparted there bear the stamp of his thought. The work as a whole is inferior to the other testaments, from the point of view of style and charm, but there are flashes of deep thought here and there. The author begins with an admonition to serve God, both from fear and love, for fear brings to abstinence from sin, and love to diligence in performing the divine precepts, so that both elements are necessary. He then exhorts his children to acquire the habit of virtue, for good deeds depend upon habit. This is followed by rules for study, namely, to love wisdom, to concentrate attention upon the studies while in the study hall, otherwise the confinement in the room will only injure their body, while their mind will not profit by it. As for success in life, truth and justice will lead to true happiness, for happiness acquired through falsehood and injustice "is built on sand." These two are the best remedy for timidity and no shield is of more protection than truth and justice. He further enjoins his children to deal honestly in business and pride themselves on their virtues for "There is," he says, "no pedigree as noble as virtue and no heritage equal to honor." Maimonides then extols the virtues of a peaceful disposition and forbearance, and especially meekness which is "the ladder to the heights of morality." As a physician he counsels moderation in food and drink, for overfeeding is the cause of many a disease. He also recommends economy and makes the following fine remark: Expenditure is divisible into four categories, profit, loss, aversion and honor. Profit is expenditure on loans to the needy, for we enjoy the interest, while the capital remains (reference to reward in heaven, after Mishnah Peah 1, 1), loss is money spent in gambling, aversion is that spent on food, for it is eaten up, honor is the money spent on clothes. Therefore, he says, loathe gambling, eat less than the means allow, clothe yourself in accordance with your means, and devote the greatest portion of wealth to charity. With an admonition to the children to honor their wives and serve their friends with their bodies and wealth, but not with their souls, as this belongs to God alone, the testament ends.

C. Philosophic Exegesis

179. EXEGETICAL WORKS OF ISRAELI AND GABIROL

Since Jewish philosophy was primarily an attempt to harmonize the teachings of the Bible with the current philosophic thought, it might have been expected, that there should develop a particular species of exegesis which can be called philosophic. This kind of exegesis attempts to solve the problem in connection with the text it undertook to explain. Its real development, however, belongs to the Post-Maimonidean Period. In the period we are discussing, we have only its beginnings. Only a few have attempted to follow this kind of exegesis, and only little was preserved of such commentaries. Isaac Israeli (see Sect. 162) wrote an extensive commentary to the first two chapters of Genesis, under the name 'An essay on Let the Waters bring forth" (Gen. I, 20) where he discusses theories of creation. Gabirol must have also written some commentaries in a philosophic and allegoric manner, as some of his explanations to passages are quoted by Ibn Ezra in his commentaries. And finally Ibn Ezra himself, though he disparages, in the introduction to his commentary, such methods, yet he made extensive use of them. A considerable part of his commentary is devoted to such philosophic exegesis, and many are the excursuses that he makes in the field of philosophy, in various parts of his commentary.

There are also beginnings of philosophic homiletics in this period, but very little has been preserved. The only booklet of this nature which came down to us is the one mentioned above (Sect. 174), *The Reflections of the Soul* by Abraham bar Hyyia, which is both a work on ethics and a collection of homilies.

CHAPTER XII

MYSTICISM

180. GENERAL REMARKS

Mysticism, like philosophy, arises from the elemental human desire to search and investigate both natural and spiritual phenomena, and to understand their manifestations more thoroughly. But, while philosophy relies mainly on human reason and accepts it as the standard, mysticism, which is permeated with the emotional religious feeling inherent in man, is, in addition to reason, actuated by revelation and inspiration. It is thus a third current, in the history of human spiritual development, standing midway between dogmatic religion and philosophy. [1] It is bound to rise in the life and literature of every religious people whose religion is revealed, and which revelation finds expression in sacred writings. These writings or scriptures in their literal meaning, can never satisfy the searching mind nor the thirsting spirit, who want both more of religious warmth and depth of meaning. Hence, bold religious people begin to believe that there must be more in these writings than the literal meaning of the words convey, and that they undoubtedly contain some hidden mysteries, and therefore efforts are put forth to unfold these mysteries from the words of the scriptures, to probe their depth and bring out the truths they contain.

The method used is the old famous method of allegory and symbol. Passages are taken to contain allegories, words and stories are supposed to stand not for their simple connotation, nor for the facts they relate, but are understood as symbols of great ideas, or of past and future events. Once the current of mysticism starts, it swells like a mighty stream, for imagination is one of its elements and there are no bounds to human imagination. Fancy and poetry become its forms of expression, and it often happens that the element of reason, which it originally contained, is lost in the manifold manifestations and forms of imagination and fancy.

And what was said about mysticism in general can be applied with greater justice to Jewish mysticism in particular. Jewish mysticism, even in its most exotic form, later known as Kabbala, of which so much has been written, is not a foreign importation into Jewish life and literature, as many have maintained, but of indigenous growth. Undoubtedly in the course of its development and its different permutations, it absorbed foreign elements and was certainly subjected to external influence, but its roots lie deep in Jewish antiquity, and in its older form—Pre-Zoharite, or Pre-Kabbalistic—is closely allied to Agada. When after the Babylonian exile, the expanded religious life demanded a wider interpretation and an unfolding of the Pentateuch for the purpose of finding the way how to live in accordance with the law, the more intensified religious feeling demanded a similar broader interpretation of the moral narratives and poetic portions of the Bible, to satisfy the growing inner religious needs; and the results of all these interpretations, were Halakah and Agada. At that time, there arose also a demand, on the part of a few very deep religious souls, to interpret and explain such portions of the Bible, which deal with the very root of things, namely, with God and His primal relation to the world, i. e. its creation.

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[1] On this see A. Franck, Kabbala, German trans., p. 29.

It is possible that Babylonian influence had somewhat to do with the rise of the urge for understanding the very fundamentals of existence, but be that as it may, the fact remains that the portions of Genesis dealing with creation, and the Visions of Ezekiel (Ezek, Chs. I, X) containing the Tehophany, or the description of the *Merkabah,* i.e. divine chariot, formed the nuclei around which the first mystic speculations centered. There are even references to such speculations about the *Merkabah* in the book of Chronicles,[2] which is included in the very Canon of the Bible and was composed in the Fourth Century B. C. E.; ben Sira, who wrote at the beginning of the Second Century B. C. E., warns his readers not to occupy themselves with the mysteries of creation.[3] All this goes to show that as early as the fourth and the third centuries before the common era, there already were in evidence mystic speculations in Israel. In fact the Bible itself gave the impetus for such speculations. The very contradiction between the anthropomorphic descriptions of God used by the Prophets themselves, on the one hand, and the high and lofty conception of Him embodied in such expressions, "I am that I am" (Ex. Ch. III, 15), and many other places, on the other hand, spurred on thinking minds to speculation. Moreover, it even supplied the very method, for were not the *Merkabah* and other similar visions symbolic expressions of the revelation and manifestations of God? It is no wonder, therefore, that people endeavored to unravel these mysteries and understand what these symbols really mean. Again as to creation, does not the book of Proverbs speak of wisdom in such terms as, "When He prepared the heavens I was there" or, "I was by Him as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight" (Prov. VIII, 27, 30)? What do these expressions mean if not that "Wisdom" played an important role in the creation of the world, and how? Was it an instrument of creation or something else? And what is that "Wisdom"? Here is food for thought and the germs of later mystic teachings even of Kabbala itself.

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[2] Chr., Ch. XXVIII, 18, see L. Zunz Gottesdienstliche Forträge, p. 162.

[3] Ecclesiasticus, Ch. III, 21.

It was not, however, until the rise of the Alexandrian School of Jewish thought, that such teachings began to take shape in a more systematized form. In Alexandria where oriental wisdom, Greek philosophy and Jewish speculation mingled, teachings with a decided mystic trend became prevalent. We have already seen above (Ch. I) the traces of such theories in the apocryphal books, such as the extreme hypostization, i. e. personification, of "Wisdom" in the book, Wisdom of Solomon (Sect. 18), the allegories and the excessive use of symbols in the books of Enoch and Jubilees, which, though of Palestinian origin, were yet greatly influenced by the Jewish Alexandrian School. Similar movements were going on in Palestine proper. We find in the later chapters of Daniel, which were most likely added after the close of the Canon, mystic appellations of God such as "The Ancient of Days" (Dan. VII, 9) and there is there also an attempt to describe His garment "Which was white as snow" and the hair of His head which was "like pure wool." Clearly, these are symbols, or God is entirely not meant here, but a revelation or a manifestation of His presence. Such expressions show evidently the trend of thought going on in certain Jewish circles.

During the centuries, different elements were added to the mystic current. Undoubtedly the Essenes had their peculiar teachings, but almost nothing was left of their writings if they ever had any. Again the teachings of Philo (see Ch. IV, Sect. 68), especially his theory of the Logos, found their way into Palestine and even into the schools of the early Tannaim. A greatly modified form of the Logos, which was named *Memra,* i. e. word, or expression, was used in the authorized Targum as a substitute for many anthropomorphic expressions in the Bible (Ch. IV). But it is really difficult to follow the development of the current of mysticism, as it seems that the teaching was imparted orally. We only know that at the beginning of the period of the Tannaim, two different forms of mystic teachings were imparted to especially deserving students, one named *Maase Bereshith* (relating to creation) and the other *Maase Merkabah* (relating to the Merkabah, i.e. Divine Chariot).

An old Mishnah states: "We are not allowed to disclose the *Maase Bereshith* to two people together, nor the *Masse Merkabah* to one, unless he is wise and possesses exceptional understanding." [4] This shows us the great secrecy in which the teachings were held. In the Talmud a number of Tannaim are named who busied themselves with these mysteries. Among them Johanan ben Zakkai, the founder of the school at Jabne, his disciple Joshua ben Chanania and others. Four others are mentioned as those who entered the "Garden" (Pardes)—a name used by many mystics to denote the secret teachings—Akiba, ben Soma, ben Asai, and Elisha ben Abuya. Ben Soma became insane, ben Asai died young, Elisha became a heretic. Only Akiba entered in peace and left in peace.[5] This story proves again not only the mysteriousness of the teachings, but the peculiarity of their character and the danger connected with their study, which shows their deviation from the beaten path of Judaism.

Yet, though there are many references to those studies in the Talmud, we are nowhere actually told what these teachings contained, and we have to rely on scanty gleanings that are to be gathered from different passages. Many are the theories advanced by different scholars concerning the nature of these studies. The most plausible, however, is that the *Maase Bereshith* centered around the question whether the world was created from nothing or that there was a Primordial element, i.e. primitive matter, out of which this world was created. The idea of eternity of matter, in one form or another, was common property in Greek philosophy. Plato taught it, Aristotle went further and taught the eternity of the world (see Ch. XI), so that the question of creation was the most important in the thought of the day. The church fathers, the various mystic currents of Pagan and Christian philosophy of the first centuries, known as Gnosticism, all deal with it. These ideas also penetrated into Jewish circles, and the Jewish scholars were bound to deal with them, to combat the current notions and guard

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[4] Mishnah tractate Hagiga, Ch. II, 1.

[5] Babylonian Talmud, Hagiga 14b.

Monotheism. But, at times, certain elements remained, as we notice certain proclivities towards a more modified form of creation than the usual conception, namely, God, who is all spirit, created the extremely corporeal earth. Water is often mentioned in the Agada as being the Primitive element out of which the earth was created.

The same question, but under a different aspect, was most likely dealt with in the *Maase Merkabah*. Here, there were more delicate subjects, namely, God, His attributes, revelation and manifestation to man, and above all his relation to the world, to be explained and clarified. Again, the question arose: how could the most high God, stripped of all qualities, the Pure Spirit, have any relation with matter, or how did matter come into being altogether? A theory of emanation was proposed, namely, that out of the Godhead there emanated a series of forces, and these forces the further they descended in the scale the more material they became, and in this way matter was emanated through a long series from God. All these questions were included in some way in the *Maase Merkabah*.

However, we have only pointed out the philosophic kernel in these speculations. In reality it was not that way. This kernel was surrounded by a thick crust of symbolism and figures. Close to the *Maase Merkabah* there is the whole hierarchy, so to say, of angels. Angels are mentioned by name in the Bible, such as Michael (Daniel X, 13. 21; XII, 1) who is called "The great prince who standeth over the children of thy people" and Gabriel (Ib. VIII, 16). They are also mentioned before (e. g. in Ezekiel, Zachariah) but not by name. These angels are the ministers of God, and in the later mystic teachings they were identified with the "Divine powers" taught by Philo. All these powers or angels are the mediators between God, the world and man.

Sometimes, in an effort to grasp the attributes of God more tangibly even they, i. e. the attributes, were likewise hypostatized, i. e. personified, and were spoken of as if they were separate things, such as we have in Agadic literature *Midath ha-Din,* i. e. attribute of justice, and *Midath ha-Rachmin,* i. e. attribute of mercy, spoken of in a quasi-personified way. And at times these attributes were often given names and called angels and assigned different functions. Their names were as a rule compounded with the name of God especially El, such as the Biblical names of Michael (Heb. Mi-Ko- El, i. e. who is like God) and the later Talmudic names as Raphael (Heb. Rpha-El) Suriel, which signify the healer of God and the Prince of God, respectively, inasmuch as the first was supposed to be the angel of healing and the second the chief of the angels. When under the influence of ideas current in the outer world, which dealt with similar problems, God was constantly exalted above the world, and the scope of the mediators, or powers, or angels increased, the various functions of the angels were also increased, and their names were often borrowed from the Greek or Latin, in order to define their function more precisely and correctly. Thus, the name of the angel *Metatron,* who plays an exceptionally important role in the mystic teachings, is borrowed from the Latin in a Grecized form. His importance is indicated in the name, for *metator* means, in a borrowed meaning (original meaning surveyor), overseer. He is variously designated, in the mystic passages of the Agadah, at times as chief of the angels, and at other times, prince of the world (Sar haolam) which shows that he is entrusted with the conduct and overseeing of the world. In later mystical books he assumes still greater importance and is almost considered second to God. In this conception there are the influence and an echo of the Philonian teaching of the Logos (see Ch. IV) and other mystic teachings current in the first centuries. The source of all this conglomeration of ideas is that God Himself, who is often denominated, by the mystics of all religions at that time, as the Unknown, is so high and elevated that He can have nothing to do with the world, and only the Powers or Mediators take care of it. Hence the importance of the greatest of Mediators, *Metatron.*

In these mixed teachings, where Jewish mystic ideas absorbed some ideas of the mystics of other nations, especially of the Eastern esoteric teachings, there was involved great danger, for the Gnostic sects who were both pagan and Christian also emphasized the importance of the Mediators and also taught a well-ramified system of angels. In fact, Christianity made use of this theory and identified Jesus with the Prince of the Angels, and with the Logos. It is also stated in the Talmud that one of the four who entered the "Garden," i.e. Elisha ben Abuya, who became a heretic, mistook *Metatron* as a second God, and this was the cause of his heresy.[6]

To avert this danger, the great sages and especially Akiba, who was also a student of mysticism, began to emphasize once more pure Monotheism, that God himself conducts and guides the world, and that the angels are only created beings who are subservient to the will of God, and the more, it was officially taught that angels do not exist forever but rise and pass away; and still more that every day a new group of angels are created and as soon as they sing the praise of God they pass away.

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[6] Hagiga 15a.

Thus, a check was put in official Agada on the spread and development of dangerous tendencies in mysticism. But that the old teachings still remained and were taught and even developed, especially along the lines of angelology, is certain. As will be evident later, we note, in mystic literature, that the number of angels is increased, and the forms of their names multiplied.

Even more, this same Akiba who was such a great defender of traditional teachings but who was also a student of mysticism, himself supplied some of the important factors for the development of mysticism, which also became a cardinal point in the teachings of the Kabbala. He, whether to combat the dangerous teachings of the Logos and the Mediator ideas, or from his unbounded love for the Torah, taught that the Torah was the instrument of God in creating the world.[7] That it, of course, preceded the world for countless ages seemed self-evident. Apparently, it seems that there was nothing new in this doctrine, for that wisdom existed before the creation of the world is already spoken of in the book of Proverbs, and that it was the instrument of creation is often repeated in the Hellenistic Apocrypha. But there is a great difference between the abstract *wisdom* and the Torah. The Torah is a concrete thing and what is more, the Torah is expressed in language and through letters. When the Torah assumes such an office, every word and letter in it becomes important and is endowed not only with sanctity but with a supernatural power. Hence, we see that Akiba in his Halakah, derived laws from every letter, and even from the ornamentations of the letters. This theory of the power of the letters, though not exploited fully by Akiba himself, was destined to play an important role in the successive development of the phases of mysticism.

Another element of mysticism which is of great importance is the exceptional value attached to the name of God, to the very letters composing it. In the East, in general, the name of a person means really a part of the essence and personality of the one who bears it, and the same idea is expressed in the Bible continually by concealing the name of God, and giving it various appellations. The tetragramaton (i. e. the four letters JHVH) is very often substituted by the name Lord (Adonai) though the punctuation is borrowed from the Divine Name.

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[7] Aboth, Ch. III, 14.

Later, the name was considered ineffable, and only very select priests were allowed to pronounce it, and as a result various appellations were substituted. Hence the use of the name was considered a very mysterious means for performing supernatural deeds. By the use of the ineffable name (Heb. Shem ha-Mepherosh) wonders were performed, and only very pious people versed in the mystic lore could use it.

Again, on account of the sanctity attached to the name of God, an intense study of the meaning of the name, the significance of each letter, as well as the numerical value of each of these, has sprung up. New names were mystically evolved from the initials of certain words in certain verses of the Bible, and thus we have the Divine name of twelve letters, of forty-two letters and even of seventy-two letters. Besides, by a mystic method which utilized the permutations of the letters of the Alphabeth, new names were evolved, and consequently we have later mystical books speak of seventy names of God.[8] Each of these names of course has not only a special significance, inasmuch as it indicates a power or attribute, but also a certain mystical power.

Furthermore, power was also attached to the names of the angels, who also discharge certain functions, and appellations were also given to them, so that consequently their names were multiplied and increased, especially those of the great Mediator *Metatron*. It is mentioned in the same mystic writing, that *Metatron* has also seventy names and a list of them is given. Thus, an extensive teaching has arisen concerning the names of God and those of angels, their permutations and changes which ramified into various directions and became the woof of many a mystic book.

To sum up, there are three main elements in the mystic teachings of Judaism, in its earlier phase, which should be called plain mysticism (Torath Hanistor, or Nestereth) as well as in the later phase, that of Kabbala. There are, first of all, those teachings clustering around the questions of the *Merkabah* i.e. the manifestations of God, His attributes and His relation to the world on the one hand, and around the question of creation on the other. The second is the hypostization of the Torah making it together with its letters an eternal, or the earliest, being as well as an instrument in creating the world. The third is the power attached to the names of God and the angels. Together with these teachings, we must also take into consideration the development of the belief in angels, and the theory that they are powers of God and mediators between Him and the world which theory may be considered in a certain way a fourth element, though it is really a result of the teachings themselves which endeavored to explain the manifestations of God and His relations to the visible world.

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[8] The Alphabeth Di Rabbi Akiba, p. 9.

We must, however, note, that although there were originally two currents, which were distinguished by the early Tannaim by the two different names of *Maase Bereshith* and *Maase Merkabah,* they soon were joined into one current of mysticism which swelled into a mighty river. Furthermore, the earlier philosophic kernels they contained, not only were amalgamated with the excessive symbolism used, and the theories of angelology, but were overwhelmed by them, and at times, in certain books became indiscernible. On the whole, though, especially in a part of the later Kabbala they are quite distinguished. In general we note here a phenomenon common to other attempts at symbolism. All symbols are meant to be a bridge between the limited human mind and the high abstract conceptions. They are supposed to stand for great ideas which can not be expressed in their entirety and can not be encompassed by human language. But it often happens that the symbols become not means of expression but an end in themselves. All the sanctity and reverence for the higher things of which they are supposed to be an index are ultimately given to the symbols themselves, and thus the very purpose of the use of the symbols is defeated. The same happened in Jewish mysticism. While originally, names of God and angels as well as the figures employed otherwise, were intended as symbols of attributes of God, of high conceptions, they ultimately became objects in themselves, and thus, we see teachings which were intended to impart an exalted conception of God, employ a most anthropomorphic language, and devote much space to description of measurements of the *Glory of God,* which they hypostatized, and also of the bodies of angels, and even, which is almost impossible to say, of the "limbs" of God Himself. A very strange phenomenon indeed, yet such are the facts, though we can not exactly say whether these descriptions should be taken literally, or that they contain some hidden meanings.

After we have had a short glimpse into the elements and genesis of the mystic teachings we may have a survey of the literature thereof.

181. THE EARLY MYSTIC LITERATURE

All these teachings, the essence of which we outlined, are referred to here and there in the Talmud. We find quite a number of passages, both in the Talmudic Agada, and in the special Agadic collections, the Midrashim, which express these ideas, both of the nature of the creation and of the Merkabah. We find there references to the names of angels, and even quotations of dicta of angels, which were communicated by them to a few of the Tannaim. Especially prominent among the recipients of those direct angelic teachings is Rabbi Ishmael, the son of Elisha, a contemporary of Akiba and his generation, who was supposed to have ascended to heaven, and thus communicated with the chief angel of the Presence, *Suriel* (Sar Haponim). These mystic teachings are not limited to the earlier generations of the Tannaim; later scholars such as the Amoraim have also busied themselves with these studies, and a certain Book of Creation is mentioned in the Talmud, which was the subject of study by a few scholars of the third generation of Amoraim (i. e. the scholars who succeeded the compilation of the Mishnah).

Yet, throughout Talmudic times, and even a century or two after the close of the Talmud, there hardly existed any special written literature of this kind. It is only in the middle of the Gaonic period that such books begin to appear. The books bear a pseudo-epigraphic character, as they are ascribed to early Tannaim, especially to those whose names are known from the Talmud to have occupied themselves with mystic teachings such as Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiba. The form of these books is either the Mishnaic, namely, given in the form of single statements, or the Agadic, i. e. the form of Midrash. In this earlier literature, the mystic teaching is mostly given in the form of Agada, i. e. interpretations of verses by means of which the teachings are supposed to be evolved.

Thus, we have the Aleph-Beth of Rabbi Akiba, a Midrash on the letters of the alphabet, and a group of small books, or parts of books, bearing the name of *Hekaloth* (Palaces). There is a larger one (Hekaloth Rabathi) and a smaller one (Hekaloth Zutrata), both of which are ascribed to Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha. They also bear other names, such as Chapters of the Merkabah (Pirke Merkabah), *Maase Merkabah* and several more. There is also another group of works ascribed to Rabbi Ishmael, several small books which bear the name of *Maase Bereshith,* and a larger work known as the book of Enoch, which contains the communication of Enoch or *Metatron* (see Ch. I, Sect. 22) to Rabbi Ishmael when he ascended to heaven. Besides these, there are a number of anonymous mystic Midrashim such as the Midrash Konen so called, after the first word of the verse (Proverbs III, 19), which forms the motto of the book, another Aleph-Beth Midrash, and finally the famous booklet *Shiur Komah* (i. e. the extent of the height) which is supposed to give the proportion of the height of the Godhead. This book, on account of its gross anthropomorphism, formed a point of attack by many writers on mysticism, especially by the Karaites, and called forth attempts of defense in various ways by several of the Gaonim.

In attempting to delineate the character of these books, one finds himself in great difficulty, inasmuch as they contain a lot of repetition, and are in most cases a collection of fragmentary sayings. In general, they can be divided into two classes, one primarily Agadic and only partly mystic, and the other primarily mystical. The latter is divided into those dealing with creation and description of the world, namely, Maase Bereshith, and those devoted to description of the heavens and the Merkabah, i. e. the number of angels, their size and names, as well as other particulars, of the Theophany. The lines, however, are not fast drawn, as there are a number of descriptions of angels even in the first division.

As we have noticed, the supposed authors of most of the books, are as a rule two, Akiba and Ishmael. The reason for this is that Rabbi Akiba is known as one of those who entered the "Gardens" (Pardes) and was deeply interested in mystic study. It was he who emphasized the theory that the Torah was the instrument of God in creating the world. Rabbi Ishmael again is refered to several times, in the Talmud and Midrashim, as the one who ascended to heaven, primarily to protest against the order issued by the Roman proconsul in Judea, during the Hadrianic persecutions, decreeing a death of martyrdom to ten great Jewish scholars, of which he was one.[9] There, according to the story, he was told that the decree was confirmed by the heavenly court, so that the Jews should expiate their sins by the death of these martyrs. It was therefore natural that all mystic teachings should be ascribed to these two outstanding figures. Rabbi Ishmael was especially favored, for he was supposed to have surveyed the heavens and to have had secrets communicated to him during his visit there by the angels, especially *Metatron.*

The several versions of the Alpha Beth Midrash ascribed to Rabbi Akiba contain primarily Agadic matter on each of the letters of the

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[9] The ten Martyrs, or as they are known, Asara Haruge Malchuth, are referred to in the Talmud, and are the subject of special Midrashim, describing their death, and also of several Piutim, sacred poems. Their names are variously given in different lists, but Akiba and Ishmael are contained in all of them.

Aleph-Beth tinged with mystic interpretations. The source of all these queer interpretations is, of course, the conception that the letters have a kind of existence and power. The names of the letters are interpreted in various ways, every letter of the name standing for a word, and thus moral teachings are derived, e. g. the name of the first letter Aleph, means: teach thy mouth the truth (i. e. Emeth Lamed Picha, representing the three letters of the name respectively). Besides these simple significances of the letters, they are hypostasized and given functions in the Merkabah, in the creation of the world. A great deal is made of the combination of letters and especially of the letters composing the names of God. In this book there is also, probably for the first time, an attempt to raise *Metatron* to an exceptionally high position as being the greatest Mediator between God and the world. He, like God, has seventy names, and is, on the whole, placed almost in a secondary position to God. This kind of teaching is really in direct opposition to the teachings of Akiba and other scholars of his age, who on the contrary, endeavored to minimize the importance of the angels, and made *Metatron* a created being like other angels. And yet, strangely enough, such teaching was ascribed to him. In the book there are also several passages which speak of the measurements of the angels and even of the Divine Presence (Shekina) in fabulous numbers. Thus, though the bulk of it is of an Agadic moral nature, it contains all the elements of mystic teachings expounded at greater extent in the other books and even in later Kabbala. Similarly, it can be said about the other anonymous Aleph-Beth Midrash.

Of the two groups of writings ascribed to Rabbi Ishmael, the first one which we called, in our classification, Maase Bereshith and which contains several small booklets under that name, deal in a general description of the extent and measurements of the entire universe and its component parts, as the earth, the abyss (Thom), the heavens and others. They also tell of the creation of the world, or rather worlds, for there are many of them—according to a strange calculation of the numerical value of the letters of a certain word—one hundred ninety-six thousand. There are according to these books, seven earths and seven heavens, and the abyss extends below all these earths. All these booklets are full of fabulous numbers into which these measurements run. There are also mentioned the seven heavens and a long list of the names of the various angels stationed at the gates of the sides of each one is given. The sun and the moon are not forgotten and strange notions regarding their nature are stated. Likewise, the names of the angels taking charge of the luminaries are given. On the whole, these writings represent a curious trend of mysticism with peculiar cosmogonic notions. Parallels to the cosmogony found here, we find in the ancient apocalyptic book of Enoch, which shows the antiquity of the ideas.

Very similar to the Maase Bereshith group of booklets is the *Midrash Konen*. It is divided into three parts. The first deals with the creation of the world, speaks of the Torah as the instrument of creation, but in a modified way, namely, that since the Torah contains seventy-three names of God (the numerical value of the Hebrew letters of Hokmah = 73) it is by means of these names that the world was created. It also speaks of three primal elements: water, fire and light that preceded the creation of earth. We will soon see how all these disjointed elements were later joined into a system by the author of the *Book of Creation*. The second part deals with the description and measurements of the world. In the center is the habitable earth. It is surrounded on the four sides as follows: by the paradise to the east, by the ocean and a desert after it to the west, by the Gehenna or hell, to the north, by the chambers of the winds and storms to the south. A description of Paradise and Hell is also given, telling of their various parts, and of course giving their measurements in fabulous numbers. The unit of measurement is the number of miles a man can walk in a year, and is simply called a "year." It is in these years that the measurement is given. Just to have a conception of the peculiar magnitudes our author is dealing in, suffice it to mention that the extent of Paradise is eight hundred thousand years, and that of Hell is a million and seven hundred and five years. Yet even these pale beside the thousands of light years our astronomers are dealing in.

The third part is devoted to the wisdom reflected in life and how things are balanced in it. There is always a protection for the weak against the strong. This is especially applied to the people of Israel who are protected by their guardian angels, Michael and Gabriel, against the onslaughts of the nations of the world and their angel princes—for every nation has a prince in heaven. The motto of the book is the passage in Proverbs (III, 19, 20): "God has founded the earth with wisdom and established the heavens with understanding." The passage is variously interpreted to derive all the teachings from it, and wisdom is identified with the Torah.

Of the other group ascribed to Rabbi Ishmael the book of Enoch is the most orderly arranged. It consists of five chapters. In the first one Rabbi Ishmael tells of his ascending to heaven and meeting with *Metatron,* who took him under his protection and acted as his guide there. *Metatron* then relates to Rabbi Ishmael the story of his translation and transformation from the man Enoch into the angel he is now. The rebellion of the angels is referred to. The story is similar to the one contained in the apocalyptic book of Enoch. The other four chapters describe systematically a trip by Rabbi Ishmael through heaven under the guidance of *Metatron.* The second chapter gives an account of the functions of certain high angels in the heavenly hierarchy, such as the cherubim and seraphim. An attempt is made to give the measurements of the greatest of them. The third and fourth chapters are devoted to a description of the process of judgment, the former telling of the *Irin,* special angels who act as members of the heavenly court, and the latter of the process of judgment itself and its execution. In the last chapter, Ishmael relates what he saw in the various parts of heaven, the groups of angels stationed in different places, the chambers where the souls of the righteous dwell, both those that are not born yet, and those that already returned from a life in this world, and also describes the chambers where the deeds of men of past and future generations are stored, and other wonderful things. In this book, we meet with peculiar personification and hypostasization of things. The theory of the power of the letters as a means of creation is also made much of. Ishmael, led by *Metatron,* sees the letters by means of which heaven and earth, the constellations, and even the very angels, and the holy throne were created. It is evident that by the letters here is meant the first emanations of divine powers. In the *Hekaloth,* various descriptions of the seventh heaven are given. In the smaller *Hekaloth* book a chart is drawn of that heaven which is named Arovoth (the name is mentioned already in the Talmud). It is told that it contains 28 palaces in four groups of seven each, and a heavy wall separates each group, then the number of angels in each palace, and finally measurements of the throne of Glory, are given. The larger book of *Hekaloth* contains 30 chapters and is written in Mishnaic form and style. Its purpose is to describe the process of ascending to heaven, or as the book calls it, looking into the *Merkabah*. It is in the form of a narrative by Rabbi Ishmael, who tells sometimes of his own experience, sometimes in the name of Nehunia ben Hakone[10] the various tribulations which a Merkabah gazer has to undergo, until he reaches the highest vision. He has to pass seven palaces, until he reaches the throne. At each palace he is examined by angels whether he is worthy to enter, and is permitted to pass only after proving his worth. The book contains many hymns and songs of praise, also some extracts from a Midrash on the ten martyrs, as well as much extraneous matter. It is interesting that Rabbi Ishmael, though he is the principal narrator, associates with him Akiba as his companion on his ascension to heaven and refers to him for verification. Akiba, unlike Ishmael, is not spoken of in the Talmud as one who ascends to heaven, but the writer of the book wanting to strengthen the verity of its content has included him in the heavenly expedition.

The last one of the group, *Shiur Komah* (Measure of Height) is the most anthropomorphic of all these books. It is likewise ascribed to Rabbi Ishmael, and it undertakes to give an account of the limbs of the Godhead, that it is measured in fabulous numbers, goes without saying, but as it is, it is appalling. Not only is the measure of every limb given, but every organ is given a name. And as if to strengthen this strange description, the testimony of Ishmael and Akiba is appended at the end of the book.

All these booklets are written in pure Hebrew and little of Aramaic is employed. This fact testifies to the time of their origin, being the middle of the Gaonic period, the eighth century, for it is then that a Hebrew revival took place (Ch. VII, Sect. 90). But, that they may contain older material in the form of extracts and fragments of older books, especially apocalyptic books, is beyond doubt.

The question arises: What was the purpose of these writers in their gross descriptions of heaven and its inhabitants? Did they intend us to believe that all these descriptions really gave an account of existing realities, or did they merely use a kind of tangible and gross symbolism for more subtle ideas, which these figures are intended to convey? It is almost impossible to answer this question conclusively. The fragmentary nature of these writings prevents us from tracing the symbolism in all its degrees, namely, from the more subtle ones to the grosser ones. We know, though, that these writings formed a point of attack. In later Gaonic times the Karaite scholar, Salman ben Jeruham (see Ch. 13), a contemporary of Saadia Gaon, made considerable references to the anthropomorphic expressions contained in the *Shiur Komah* (The Measure of Height) and other similar books, and thus blames the rabbanites for conceding to such books a measure of authority. Saadia, in reply to his strictures, attempts to rationalize many strange Agadic passages, by saying that they do not refer to God, but to visions of created light, in which God appears to the prophets. As for the *Shiur Komah,* he says it is not authoritative and it is most likely a spurious work for which Judaism can not assume responsibility. He adds, though, that even if it were true that the book emanated from the school of Rabbi Ishmael, we could interpret it to mean that these measurements refer to the visions of created lights, reflection of Divine Glory. Another Gaon, Rabbi Hai, says distinctly that these expressions, "Ascension to heaven," should not be taken literally by any means, but that they mean the inward gazing of the soul at the divine Attributes, and the gazers, in passing various degrees of contemplation, speak of it as passing from palace to palace.[11] We see then attempts to interpret, to allegorize and symbolize these writings. My own view is, that these mystic writings represent the strange phenomenon, often observed in similar mystic movements, that opposites meet in a strange way. Jewish mysticism started out to evolve an elevated and subtle conception of God, His relation to the world and the process of creation. In the course of development it evolved the theory of emanation of forces from the Godhead, absorbed the theory of angels, and other kindred beliefs. To make its teachings more understandable and tangible it employed symbolic expressions. And in time these symbols became more prominent than the ideas they intended to convey. And ultimately, the angels and the letters and their various combinations began to assume an independent existence, hence the content of the books we were describing. I believe that the *Shiur Komah* is only a crude and inadequate attempt to express the greatness of God in human terms. The ordinary human mind can not conceive the Infinite, but has a conception of fabulous figures of measurement, though they be millions or even billions of miles, hence, the use of such figures. We can not, however, endorse this method as it did not bring the desired results. Mystics, in the subsequent generations, took the descriptions of these books as literal and the angels and the "palaces" and their various names became the cornerstone of a peculiarly constructed edifice known later as practical Kabbala (Kabbala Maasit), which claimed to be able to perform wonders and miracles by the various uses of these names and other things.

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[10] Rabbi Nehunia is not mentioned in Talmudic sources as one who delved in mysticism, yet the mystics refer to him as one of their sages, and later the Kabbalists ascribed to him a special book in Kabbala.

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[11] Responsum of Hai quoted in Aruch, article Eben.

All mysticism, however, did not degenerate to mere descriptions of the heavens and their hierarchy. There still flowed another current, a more spiritual one, which kept on developing and assuming the definite shape of a system, where the elements indicated above were joined in a more or less unified way. This attempt was made by an unknown author in a book which likewise became current the middle of the Gaonic period, at the close of the eighth century, and bears the title of an older book mentioned in the Talmud, namely, the Book of Creation.

182. THE BOOK OF CREATION (*Sepher Yetzira*)

The Book of Creation consists of six chapters, each one divided into statements, which modeled after the Mishnah, are called Mishnoth. The first chapter contains thirteen such Mishnoth, the second six, the third eight, the fourth twelve, and the fifth and sixth four each. The style is pure Hebrew. On account of the symbolism of its language and the curious meaning of many of the terms, it is very difficult to summarize its content, but a mere outline may be given.

Its main problem is as Judah Halevi had well seen,[12] the old problem of explaining how the manifold has evolved from the One, namely, how this world with its creatures and their vicissitudes have come forth from the one God. It is the mystic Maase Bereshith of the ancients, spoken of above, in a new form, poetic and symbolic. It must have adopted also the theory of emanation from the old teachings of the *Merkabah*. Accordingly, there are two moments in the progress of the evolving of the manifold from the One, emanation of primal materials, and actual creation, forming and combining of elements into tangible and visible things. The first is not explained, the second, i. e. creation (Beriah), is somewhat more described. The author of this book has adopted the already prevalent theory, which as we have seen, was repeated constantly in the other mystic books, namely, that the letters of the alphabet, as well as those composing the ineffable name of God, are symbols of Divine Wisdom and possess power, and by the combination of these powers, things are created. It is in this way that he cryptically intends to explain or rather to indicate the process of creation. Most likely, the meaning is, that by the combination of the powers which the letters stand for, all things were brought forth, but the mystic who uses external symbols always speaks in such a language which emphasizes the external manifestation of the spirit and the inner meaning is thus hidden.

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[12] Kuzari, Sect. 4., v. 25.

The first two Mishnoth or statements are in a way introductory and give us a clue to the book. The first reads: "By means of thirty-two wonderful paths of wisdom had God, Sebaoth, the God of Israel, living God, Eternal Being, etc., (here follow other attributes) engraved or established His name and created His world." There follows another sentence, which some think an addition but whose few words, and especially the last (Heb. Sphor, Sepher, Sipur), formed a puzzle to commentators and called forth numerous explanations. The clear-sighted Halevi has also seen the right meaning. He takes these enigmatic words (derived from the Heb. root Saphor, to count, and also to tell) in their simplest meaning, namely, Sphor, numbering, measuring, Sepher, script, and Sipur, speech. But he interprets them later in a philosophic meaning. To my mind they only contain the symbolic signs for the process of creation which the author wants to develop. The sentence is to be understood as follows. Continuing the previous, it says, "And He created His world by three signs" (Heb. Sphorim), by Sphor, numbering or measure, by which is meant the emanation of a number of primitive materials, Sepher, script, the letters which constitute the means of creation, i. e. further combinations of elements, and Sipur, i. e. speech or pronouncement of these letters—the carrying out of these combinations, for the creation of the world by the voice of God is mentioned in the Bible and in the Mishnah.

The second statement explains the 32 paths of Divine Wisdom and reads: "Ten Sephiroth, intangible, and 22 letters, of which three are fundamental, seven double, and twelve plain." Here, we meet in mystic literature, for the first time, the name "Ten Sephiroth," a term which was destined to become the very cornerstone of the later *Kabbala*. The very name Sephiroth has been a subject of exceeding discussion. Some wanted to connect it with the word sphere (derived from the Greek) and some otherwise. But it is evident, that they really mean here numbered powers. The number ten in relation to certain powers by which the world was created, is already mentioned in the Talmud. Here this number stands for the emanated elements, or categories of being, and is meant to indicate their all-inclusiveness, for numeration contains only ten degrees. After ten all goes back to one, e. g. ten and one eleven, etc. A group of Mishnoth (39) is then devoted to defining, though cryptically, the nature of these Sephiroth. They are ten, divided into two groups, like the ten fingers, five opposite five, but in the center is the covenant of unity. It means to tell us that these manifold manifestations, which presage a kind of dualism, active and passive, later symbolized by masculine and feminine, are permeated by a unity, or are united by God (M. 3). We are further told of the all-importance of the Sephiroth, namely, they are ten and not nine, ten and not eleven, i. e. neither more nor less, and one must use all his wisdom to conceive them, and then the Creator will be understood (M. 4). They are infinite in all phases, in the future or in the past, in goodness or in badness, in height or depth or in the extent to the East, West, South and North (M. 5). Enigmatic language, indeed, but the meaning is that they are endless in all phases. After a few more remarks are made about their infinity and relation to the throne of God, their interrelation with each other and to the great Unity—God, is described in a beautiful poetic phrase—namely, their relation is like the flame and the coal which are inseparable (M. 7).

After these remarks intending to describe the Sephiroth as the highest principles of being, the numeration of the Sephiroth begins. But here a certain change occurs. Instead of the ten abstract powers or categories, which we might have expected after the preceding descriptions of their nature and character, only one corresponds to that character; the others are of a more material nature. "The first Sephira is the spirit of God, blessed be His name—voice, spirit and words this is the holy spirit." It is evident that here is meant the first emanation which is infinite and is the basis of all other succeeding emanations and using older expressions, the author calls it voice, word (logos). The second, is air from spirit (M. 10). By means of primal air the twenty-two letters were engraved. The third, is primal water, wherein void, chaos and slime were established (M. 11). The fourth, is fire which comes from water, and by means of it the holy throne, the seraphim, and the angels were created. The other six are the six points of space—four points of the compass and height and depth. These points of space are also connected mystically with the six permutations of the first three letters of the name of God, namely, Yod, He, Vav, each point having been sealed with a certain arrangement of this name. This particular remark is also oft repeated in the other mystic books previously mentioned. This teaching of the Sephiroth is to a certain degree baffling, for why should spaces be counted as six Sephiroth, counting each of its points separately? Yet we can see here, the attempted emanation theory. The spirit is the first emanation and the further the emanations go, the more material they become—then primal air, water and fire are the elements of all material beings. Earth is not mentioned, for it is only a last combination. It is also evident that these elements are, as said, primal elements and not the ultimate elements of this world, but prototypes of a higher spiritual nature. With this ends the first chapter devoted to the Sephiroth, i. e. to the emanation of fundamental elements.

The rest of the chapters are devoted to the actual creation of the world, by means of combination of the letters. Here a peculiar system is developed. The letters are divided, as stated, into three classes, fundamentals or mothers (emoth), namely, the letters, Aleph, Mem and Shin; seven doubles, those that take a dagesh (i. e. a point which gives them a double pronunciation hard and soft), i. e. Beth, Gimmel, Dalath, Kaf, Peh, Resh, Tav, and the twelve simple, those that have only one sound. He then says that by combinations of pairs of letters, that is, when each letter is paired with every other, there are 231 such pairs. And these con be reversed so that there are numerous other combinations. With this ends the second chapter.

The third chapter gives more details. Here the author adopts a threefold system in the universe: the world, time and man, each of the classes of letters express creations in all these three divisions. The three fundamentals signify the three elements, air, water and fire in the world (Aleph stands for Avir, air, Mem for Maim—water, Shin for Aesh—fire, Shin being the last letter of the word), to which correspond heat, cold and moisture in the year, i. e time, each one being related to each of the elements, heat to fire, cold to water, moisture to air,[13] and the three principal parts of the body, head, belly and the chest in man, a relation of these to the elements is also traced. Emphasis is also laid here on the division between the masculine and feminine. All elements and principles in the world, time and man are thus divided.

The fourth chapter then takes up the symbols of the seven double-sounded letters. They represent, by their two sounds, the hard and soft, such things in this world, which serve for opposite purposes. By their means, seven planets were created in the world which sometimes exert a good influence upon affairs of man, sometimes a bad influence. These correspond to seven days of the week which is a part of the year, and to seven apertures or gates in the human body, namely, two eyes, ears, nostrils, and the mouth. The seven letters correspond also, in human life to seven pairs of events of an opposite character such as: life and death, peace and war, wisdom and foolishness, riches and poverty, grace and ugliness, settlement and desolation, mastery and slavery.

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[13] The year spoken of here is the oriental year where heat stands for the summer, cold for the winter, i. e. the rainy season, hence watery, and moisture for the middle season, i. e. spring and fall, when it is somewhat moist, neither dry nor rains.

The symbolic functioning of the twelve monosound letters is taken up in the following chapter. These twelve reflect the creation of twelve constellations in the world, twelve months in the year and twelve important organs of the human body, as well as the twelve functions of the body such as seeing, hearing, smelling, eating, sleeping, thinking and others. As we see, the twenty-two letters of the alphabet reflect in their hidden power all the forms of entire existence which is divided into three systems, i. e. nature, time and man. Our author is, however, anxious to show the unity in this manifold and he states that each system is dominated by a center. The center of the external world is the *Teli,* which is the axis of the world, which is sometimes called the line of the Drakon, the center of the year, the revolution of the sphere of constellations, and that of man the heart. Each one of these is like unto a king, in different positions, the first is like a king sitting on a throne, namely, performing the highest and most exalted functions, the second, the revolution of the sphere, is like a king among his subjects, for the year is an aggregate of weeks, weeks of days, and all these are caused by that revolution, the heart is like a king in war, for among the human organs, there are some organs that nourish love, others hatred, others increase life, bring constant accretion to the body, others cause changes in the body, and ultimately bring death, so the heart regulates all these functions of the organs which are at war with each other. It is, of course, not to be forgotten that the heart was, during the early Middle Ages, thought to be the seat of the soul. The author, wanting to emphasize the unity in this great manifold concludes by a remark saying: "Thus, here is one above the three, the three above seven and the seven above twelve," referring to his hierarchy in the universe—three elements, seven planets, twelve signs of the zodiac in nature, and correspondingly in time and man.

At the very end there is appended a statement that Abraham, when he conceived all these mysteries, rejoiced very much and then God was revealed to him and blessed him. This was undoubtedly inserted in order to give great authenticity to its teachings. But we indicated already the time of the composition of the book. We may add that certain other signs show definitely its date. The author is the first source for the division of the letters of the alphabet into five groups according to the five organs of speech, the throat, the tongue, the palate, lips and teeth. This division makes its appearance only in the first grammatical investigations which appear about the eighth century. The fact that the author speaks of the letter Resh taking a dagesh and having double pronunciation is taken by a number of scholars to indicate the Palestinian origin of the book, for it is only there that such a distinction was made in the pronunciation of the letter Resh. The Babylonian and the later grammarians know of no such distinction. But besides this, the whole trend of thought, as well as its borrowing of a number of passages from other mystic books which are distinctly Palestinian, indicate unmistakably its place of composition.

The book, as a whole, is an attempt to bring the various elements of mystic teachings into a system, to present a view of creation, and system and order into the world. The unity and the manifold are shown to be interrelated, the latter flowing out of the former. God is infinite and so, to a certain degree, are his manifestations, which are denominated Sephiroth. The whole scheme of the letter combinations may be a kind of symbolism of the combination of Divine thoughts, which are the creative forces of the universe and its various divisions. But in spite of the underlying philosophic thought of the book, the language and expressions introduced a different element, namely, that of too tangible symbolism and in time it formed the basis for the later Kabbala. We find here all the elements of it, the theory of emanation of the Sephiroth, the importance of letter combination and the power of the names of God. There is also the dualism running through the entire universe, between active and passive, or masculine and feminine elements, and the conflict between opposites and the ultimate reconciliation which are permanent elements in existence. All these teachings which here, are only as if casually mentioned, are later enlarged upon, exaggerated and make up the very woof of the Kabbala.

Chapter XIII

KARAITE LITERATURE

183. GENERAL REMARKS

The second half of the eighth century witnessed the rise of a schism in Jewry and the creation of a new sect which later became known as Karaites. The supposed founder of that sect was, as we know, Anan ben David (period of activity 754–775), a nephew of the exilarch Solomon ben Chisdai. The cause of his secession is supposed to be a personal grudge against the Gaonim who refused to appoint him exilarch in the place of his uncle, as they suspected him to be a heretic, and gave the office to his brother. Anan then attacked the authority of the Talmud and, allying himself with a number of people who entertained similar ideas, proclaimed a secession from the Oral Law, as taught by the Talmud and interpreted by the scholars of the academies.

The followers of Anan were numerous, for in a very short time the schism assumed the character of a well-organized sect and its teachings began to spread also in other countries. It seems probable, though not definitely established, that Anan was forced by the government to leave Babylon and therefore settled in Jerusalem, which served during the first period of the development of Karaism, as the capital of that movement. But besides the two centers, Babylon and Palestine, it gradually spread to other countries, such as Egypt, Spain, the Byzantine empire, and Crimea. The Karaite sect managed to survive through the ages, and created a considerable literature, but after having passed its zenith in the twelfth century, it began to decline and only remnants of the sect are now scattered in various parts of the world, and its end is already in sight.

In order to be able to survey the literary productions of the creative period of the Karaite sect, namely, from the end of the eighth century to the thirteenth, we must first understand the nature and character of the movement itself. Karaism, in spite of the fact that Anan is reputed to be its founder, was not a one-man movement. There were many, at the time, who were dissatisfied with the authority of the Talmud, and refused to submit to the interpretation of the oral law by the representative of Talmudic Judaism. Whether these people were secret adherents of the remnants of the Sadducean sect, as some scholars maintain,[1] or mere imitators of similar movements in the Islamic world, as others maintain,[2] the fact is that there were such people who entertained ideas contrary to the standard view of Judaism. Anan, therefore, became their mouthpiece, and they rallied around him to form a separate sect. He was the one who gave articulation to the formless and shapeless dissenting opinions and cast them into his mold and pronounced a fairly coherent doctrine which served as a basis for further development. In fact, the first sectarians were called *Annannites* and not Karaites. That name was assumed later, though the exact time of its origin can not be determined. It is derived according to most scholars, from the Hebrew root, *Karo,* i. e. to read, as well as to study, namely, those who read and accept the authority of the Bible (usually called Mikrah) only. The name bears a special significance for its use meant to indicate, on the part of those who bore it, a further digression from the ways of the Talmud than that of Anan. Anan and the *Annannites* still clung to a good number of Talmudic interpretations and ordinances. The later followers who designated themselves Karaim, abandoned, to a great extent, even these ordinances.

But no one must assume that the primary motive in the Karaite schism was the desire to lighten the burden of oral tradition, namely, to do away with the mass of laws and institutes which have accumulated, during the ages, around the written law. On the contrary, the Karaite teachings from Anan on, are distinguished by a rigorousness which imparted to their religion a gloomy aspect. In all their innovations there are very few attempts to lighten the burden of ceremonial practice of the Rabbanites (the name the Karaites gave the great mass of Jews following the Talmud), but there are many additions of a rigorous character. The real difference was a theoretical one. Anan and his followers believed that the written law alone is the source of authority and that the Mishnah and the Talmud have no authority, but that each one has a right to initiate his own interpretation of the Bible. Anan's motto was "search the Bible thoroughly" (Haphis B'Oraito Shapir). By the term Torah, Anan understood not only the Pentateuch, as the scribes and the Tannaim, who considered the Pentateuch only as the legal authority, but the entire Bible. He applied legal interpretation to all the twenty-four books and derived laws from Prophetic and Hagiographic passages as well.

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[1] On this point see Pinsker's classic work *Likkute Kadmoniot,* pp. 15, 16.

[2] Rappoport in *Kerem Hemed,* Vol. V, p. 205.

But the way of Anan was a dangerous one, for being torn from the moorings of a well-established and well-organized tradition, the Karaite leaders were left adrift on a sea of individual interpretations of the Bible. As it is well known, the written law (Torah She biktav) can not be well applied to a later developed life without interpretation. And if interpretation is left to the individual scholars, confusion and conflict are bound to result and, of course, did result, and the first teachers of the Karaites were quite perplexed at these contradictions. Besides, there were a number of practices which the Karaites could not possibly abrogate, and yet they were not explicitly expressed in the Bible, they had therefore to borrow a large number of such practices from the Rabbanites. But not wanting to appear as borrowers, they invented a tradition of their own, and claimed not only antiquity for their sect, but even originality, asserting that they observe Judaism as it was observed by the prophets, during the first commonwealth, and also by Ezra and his followers until Simon ben Shotach (see above Ch. I, Sect. 34), who first deviated from the true tradition and established the oral law of the Rabbanites. Some even claimed that Jeroboam ben Nabat was the first to lead the Jews astray in the way of the Rabbanites, while the people of Judah and Benjamin who remained loyal to the house of David kept the pure type of Judaism which they, the Karaites, are endeavoring to preserve.[3] In all events, they were careful not to be identified with the Sadducees, whom they really resemble, for the latter denied resurrection and immortality, which the Karaites profess.

All these things brought about a formulation of some principles of interpretation and practice which served as a guide to the teachers and their followers in their daily teaching and guiding. These principles are (*1*) *the writing,* i. e. the Bible, namely, all laws and practices that are expressly stated, or even implied indirectly in the entire Bible, whether Pentateuch or later books; (2) *analogy,* namely, all laws which can be deduced by the method of analogy. It was a mighty weapon, wielded but too unscrupulously by the teachers in their method of interpretation, and the result was a multitude of rigorous practices based on faulty analogies applied by different scholars. The third (3) principle was really tradition, but the Karaites did not want to use the Rabbinic name Kabbala, so they called it by various names, as *agreement* (haskamah), or *translation"* (hatakah), or more commonly, *the burden of inheritance* (sebel ha-Yerushah). These terms are supposed to denote all laws and practices which, though not expressed in the Bible, were accepted by the entire Jewish nation for ages. These principles introduced a semblance of harmony and unity in Karaism, yet, having no definitely established code, confusion continued. Each scholar kept on interpreting the writings in his own way, applying analogy, according to his standard, and hence differences are very frequent. Almost every Karaite scholar felt it necessary to write a Book of Precepts (Sepher Mitzvoth) of his own, as well as his own commentaries to the Bible. In these books of precepts, we meet very often that one prohibits what his predecessors allowed, and vice versa.

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[3] On this point see the Karaite writer in his book *The Division between the Karaites and the Rabbanites,* quoted by Pinsker in above cited work: Addenda, p. 99 seq., also Posnanski in his *Introduction to Zecher Tzadikim.*

This character of Karaism determined in a way the character of Karaite literature. The slogan of Anan, "Search the Bible thoroughly," and the constant need for interpretation of the Bible, has given great impetus to a study of the Bible, which of course, involved also a great interest in the grammar and lexicography of Hebrew. Every exegesis must pay great attention to the grammar of the language, in which the text is written, especially an exegesis which was mostly polemic, which intended to show that the Rabbinic and Talmudic interpretation of the Bible was erroneous because it did not follow the plain sense of the verses. We have, therefore, extensive literary production along the lines of language science and Biblical exegesis. Yet, between the two, the works on exegesis exceed by far those on grammar and language, in both quantity and quality. The Karaite contribution to Hebrew philology, notwithstanding the opinions of earlier Jewish scholars, is not great. It is the Rabbanites who have largely built the great edifice of Hebrew grammar and lexicography. As for exegesis, almost every Karaite scholar found it necessary to write a commentary, at least, to the Pentateuch, and very often to the other books, where his interpretation of the precepts was given. Very often, these commentaries were written especially to the Ten Commandments, where attempts were made to group all *Mitzvoth* under these ten heads.

Again, the lack of an adopted code or textbook like the Mishnah, or Talmud, necessitated the writing of books of precepts (Sepher Mitzvoth) and almost each outstanding scholar has, as stated, written either a whole book of this kind, namely, where all the precepts were included, or a partial one, where only a part of the precepts were treated.

The Karaites, in repudiating the Talmud, have very often reproached it for strange Agadic passages found therein where anthropomorphic expressions of God are given, and have accordingly prided themselves on the purity of their conception of God. This gave rise to a philosophic literature among the Karaites. But even in this field there is little originality, and the Karaite philosophy falls behind that of the Rabbanite. In the classic period, it follows mostly the Arabic Mutazalite system and in the post-classic, Maimonides.

The interest in Hebrew and exegesis also produced some poetic productions, mostly sacred. And here as in philosophy, in spite of their avowed love of Hebrew, the Karaite poets hardly surpass the mediocre standard. Even the greatest among them, Moses Darai, can not measure up to a Halevi or a Gabirol, or even to a Moses, or Abraham ben Ezra. Their books were written, to a great extent, in Hebrew but a considerable part of their literature was also written in Arabic and later translated in Hebrew. Yet, in spite of their zealousness for Hebrew, the style of the Karaite writers is hard and heavy. In their passion to be pure, and avoid as much as possible the Aramaisms of the Talmud, they lost all elasticity and flexibility of style and very often it is difficult to find clearness in their writings. In order to supply the need of expression, they were forced to coin many new words out of the meager material of the Biblical language, but there is little grace in these newly coined words and their use only encumbers the style. Thus, Karaite literature, like Karaism, paid the price of separating itself from the bubbling well of life of a nation flowing for many centuries, and was cut off from advantages which an ever-flowing fountain, like that of the genius of Israel, can supply.

184. THE EARLY PERIOD OF KARAITE LITERATURE

The Karaite literature of the first four centuries can be conveniently divided into several periods, the first period from the rise of Karaism to the beginning of the tenth century, the second embracing the tenth and eleventh centuries, and finally that of the twelfth century. During the first period, the literary productions are mostly written either in rabbinic Aramaic, or Hebrew, and they deal mainly with halakic matter, namely, consisting of books of precepts, or commentaries on the Bible, the purpose of which is the interpretation of the Bible in such a way as to deduce from it new halakahs and practices. Little attention is given to other fields, and only here and there we meet with a grammarian, or lexicographer, or a pure exegete. The centers of literary activity are Babylon and Palestine.

i. Of the outstanding writers of this period, the first one is, of course Anan, the founder of the sect. Of Anan we know definitely that he composed a Book of Precepts (Sepher ha-Mitzwoth) of which a large part is extant, and of the rest we have numerous quotations by later writers. This book is written in the current Talmudic style, namely, Aramaic mixed with some Hebrew. There seems to be no particular method adapted in grouping the laws and precepts. Groups of laws are chosen at random. The method of interpretation of the verses quoted and the deduction of the practices, is essentially the old Midrashic one, but it differs greatly from the Rabbinic, inasmuch as special efforts were made to deviate from the Talmudic interpretation of the same verses and arrive at different results. On the whole, it can be said that comparing the interpretations of Anan with those of the Tannaim, or even the later Amoraim, the former are more forced and really bear little relation to the plain meaning of the verse. Since Anan repudiated the rules of interpretation established by Hillel (see above Ch. III, Sect. 37) and the later ones added to by Rabbi Ishmael, he practically remained without any other means of operation except the analogy (Hekesh) and was forced to fall back upon the twisting of the words of the verses in strange and peculiar manners. These writings brought strange results and the laws assumed a gloomy aspect. The matters are too technical to go into detail, but it is sufficient to point to the gloomy aspect that the Sabbath assumed with the Karaites, which arises either from taking some of the verses literally, or twisting them in a strange manner. Due to this, the burning of any light on the Sabbath, even if it were kindled before Sabbath, is prohibited. Likewise, free movement on that day is greatly restricted, and a number of other pleasures considered legitimate under the rabbinic law, are rigorously prohibited by Anan.

A typical example of forced and peculiar interpretation, on the part of Anan, can serve us: the extremely complicated system of prohibited, or incestuous, marriages (Arayoth), originally instituted by him which is primarily based on a peculiar interpretation of a verse in Genesis. The verse in Genesis II, 24, which reads "And therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh," which the Talmudic authorities merely took as expressing the sanctity of marriage and derived from it some ethical teachings, became to Anan a source for deducing numerous new prohibited marriages. The words "And they shall be one flesh" mean, according to him, that husband and wife are to be considered as one always, the tie is never severed, even after they are divorced, or even when one dies, and consequently all relatives of the wife acquired by new marriages after divorce or vice versa, the new relatives of the husband, acquired by a new marriage, are prohibited for them as well as for their children, from their own union or from former or later unions. Similarly, the prohibited relatives of the wife remain prohibited for the husband even after she dies, e. g. the wife's sister is prohibited to the husband even after the wife dies. Other verses in the Bible regarding prohibited marriages, were interpreted accordingly. Consequently the very complicated system of incestuous marriages ensued as a result. This system is known as *Rikkub* (i. e. from the verb *rakeb,* to compound or join) and it weighed heavily upon the Karaites, for it happened often that whole communities were prohibited to intermarry with each other. It was though later modified.

Such and other things can serve us as examples of Anan's interpretation, which was aggravated by his successors. When the Pentateuch was not sufficient the other books were drawn upon, and even passages of historical narrative or poetic ones were often made to yield a legal prohibition. Anan himself, however, followed to a great extent Talmudic interpretation, his successors digressed more in this strange method.

Some Karaite writers have also ascribed to Anan a commentary to the Pentateuch and an Arabic book by the name *Fadilikah,* i. e. a summa. But we are not certain about them, as no trace is left of these writings. It is also possible that the last name was only an Arabic summary of the Book of Precepts.

ii. Benjamin Nahvendi (i. e. of the city of Naound), who flourished about forty or fifty years after Anan (c. 830), is considered by the Karaites as the second founder of the sect. He evinced a more rigorous tendency and in some cases he is more antagonistic to the Talmudic law, but in other practices he deviated from Anan and adopted again the Talmudic law and practice. He wrote, likewise, a book of precepts by the name of *Masath Beniamin,* i. e. the Present of Benjamin. This book was written in Hebrew and is primarily a book of civil law, including that of family law. As said, he was very rigorous and he was the one who gave a great impetus to the development of the complicated prohibited-marriages system. But, he also mentioned in his book the Rabbinic practices and at the close of his book, copies of which he sent to all Karaite communities, he appended a letter calling attention to the fact that he included Rabbinic practices in civil matters, and that those who desire can follow them and judge according to them. Benjamin was also the first Karaite philosopher. He has followed the Mutazilites in removing all anthropomorphism from God. But he has gone to extremes in that direction, inasmuch as he propounded a theory that God has first created the angels and especially the primate angel, whom He commissioned to create the world and be the mediator between Him and this world. According to this, then, wherever it is written in the Bible "and God appeared, or descended, etc.," this angel is referred to. Likewise, the revelation on Sinai will have to be relegated to him. We have here a modified theory of the Philonian Logos (see above Ch. IV, Sect. 68) with this difference though, that with Philo the Logos is an emanation, while with Benjamin the angel is a created thing. He entertained also a peculiar notion regarding punishment after death which, he says, falls entirely on the skeleton and not on the soul, to the refutation of which Saadia devoted a few paragraphs in his Emmunoth Vedeoth. From all this, it must be evident that Benjamin wrote a whole book on philosophy, but his successors who quote his opinions never mention the source.

Benjamin wrote commentaries, in Arabic, to several books of the Bible. Thus, we have lengthy quotations from, and references to a commentary of his on the Five Scrolls. There are also quoted several comments of his, to verses in Isaiah and Daniel, from which we may possibly conclude that he commented on these books too. From the quotations we can see that Benjamin was really a good exegete and endeavored to explain the text, in accordance with the plain meaning (peshat) and principles of grammar. He displays a fine sense of the language and keen understanding of the text.

iii. A third outstanding scholar of this period is Daniel ben Moses al Kumasi (flourished the end of the ninth century), as he hailed from the city of Kumis, the capital of a province in Persia. Daniel wrote, like all the Karaite scholars, a Book of Precepts in Hebrew, where he displays a very rigorous attitude towards the observance of ceremonies, especially strict was his teaching regarding the Sabbath, so that he even forbade the cleaning of the hands when not absolutely necessary. He was equally strict in regard to prohibited foods and included among them also eggs, as he considered the egg an unfinished thing. We find, in his Book of Precepts also other peculiarities such, as that the new year begins with the day of Atonement. He also wrote a commentary to the Pentateuch where he followed closely the plain meaning of the words and was especially averse to speculative interpretation.

iv. David ben Boaz, surnamed by later writers the prince (Hanasi) (fl. c. 910), is frequently quoted by various authors. He wrote a commentary to the Pentateuch, which was lost, but from the excerpts found in other writings, we can conclude that his commentary was widely read and quoted and he acquired a great reputation as an exegete. Besides his exegetic work, he also composed a book on the fundamental doctrines of religion or as he called it a book of dogmas (Kitab Al-Vsil).

v. Of this period we know one grammarian and Masorite, Judah ben Elon of Tiberias (d. 1032), who settled at Jerusalem and is called the head of the academy at that city. He wrote a book on the Hebrew grammar by the name of *Meor Enaim* (the light of the eyes). This book as we can see from a quotation by a later encyclopedist [4] dealt primarily with the derivation and classification of the nouns. He is also shown to have composed some sacred poems.

185. THE ARABIC PERIOD

The tenth and eleventh centuries which form the great classic period in Jewish literature in general, can also be denominated the classic period of the Karaite division. During these two centuries, the Karaite sect brought forth its best literary productions. And like the Rabbanite literature during this time, the Karaite used Arabic, to a very great extent, as the medium of expression. Most of the great writers wrote their works in that language, of which a considerable number were translated into Hebrew, while many books remained in the original and were thus lost to posterity and are only known to us by quotations.

i. The first great writer who begins this period is Jacob Al-Kirkisani (fl. first half of the 10th century). He is usually known as Abu Yusuf by later writers, and was also, at times, called Joseph, which fact brought a good deal of confusion among scholars as to the identification of this Karaite savant. The Kirkisani composed his great work in Arabic in the year 937. The work is divided into two parts, the first being called by a euphemistic name, *Flower beds and Gardens.* It is primarily a commentary on the Bible. The second part is called grandiloquently *The Book of*

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[4] Judah Hadasi in his encyclopedia *Eshkol Hakopher,* p. 69a.

Beacon Lights and is mainly a book of precepts. But it also treats of other subjects, especially of history and theology. The first four sections of the book are devoted to these subjects. Of especially great value is the first section which is the introduction to the whole book. It deals with the history of religious sects, and is divided into eighteen chapters discussing the origin and history of all then existing sects. He tells first of the older sects, the Samaritans and the Sadducees. He believes that the latter were nearer to the path of true religion than the Pharisees. It is interesting to note that he speaks of Sadducean books which were still extant in his time. The other chapters are devoted to the description of a dozen Jewish sects, some of them bearing strange names, such as one named the Megarians, i. e. cave men, for their sacred books were supposed to have been found in caves, and other sects similar to them. These sects led an ascetic life and were somehow akin to the Essenes in Temple times. He also discusses the Christians, quoting the opinions of the Rabbanite and Karaite scholars about them, and treats also the various divisions of the Karaites themselves. In these matters he supplied valuable data about Anan, his teachings, and about Benjamin Nahavendi and his philosophy. This section does not, of course, lack polemic matter. Kirkisani devotes several chapters to an attack on the Agada of the Talmud and the mystic books where anthropomorphic expressions are used, thus vindicating the purity of the Karaite conception of God. The second section is devoted to show the necessity for investigation and interpretation of the Torah, the third, to a refutation of the erroneous conceptions of the various sects, and the fourth, to the discussion of the right path of the knowledge of the law. The body of the book is the usual Karaite book of precepts with a good deal of polemics against Saadia, his contemporary, in particular, and the Rabbanite interpretation of the law, in general. To him is also ascribed a book on dogmas, but little is known of it, and it is probably a section of his Magnum Opus.

ii. Abu Surri ben Zuta, usually referred to as ben Zuta, was a Karaite exegete, who lived in Egypt during the first half of the tenth century, and was a contemporary of Saadia Gaon, as well as his opponent. Ibn Ezra, in his commentary to the Pentateuch, quotes ben Zuta's interpretations to certain verses several times, as well as Saadia's refutations to some of these interpretations. From the few quotations by Ibn Ezra, it is evident that ben Zuta's commentary was greatly distorted by the polemic spirit against the Rabbanite interpretation of the Bible, as he very often deviates from the plain meaning of the verse, in order to offer a different explanation than the Rabbinical one. The polemic between him and Saadia must have been an oral one, as we find no trace of a book or pamphlet by Saadia against ben Zuta.

iii. Another contemporary of Saadia, and a violent polemic writer against Rabbinism and Rabbinic law, was Ibn Sakya. His main literary work seemed to have been a book written in Arabic under the name of *The Book of Shameful Things* (Kitab Al-Fadach) by which term he meant to characterize the Rabbinic interpretations of the Bible. The book was divided into ten sections, each one taking a certain phase of Rabbinic law. He especially accused the Rabbinites of describing God in anthropomorphic terms, of misinterpreting the Bible and falsifying the calendar. His book must have exerted, at the time, considerable influence, for Saadia thought it necessary to reply to it in a special book called *The Refutation of Ibn Sakya,* where he refutes his arguments and does not spare his person. Saadia says satirically, that the name "Shameful Things" given by Ibn Sakya to his book is a very appropriate one, for it is really full of shameful things uttered by the author.

iv. An important figure in Karaite literature of this period was Salmon ben Jerucham (910). He was a younger contemporary of Saadia but he seems to have begun his polemical activities against him after the latter's death. Salmon was born in Egypt and settled later in Jerusalem, but he made frequent trips to Egypt and Babylonia. He wrote both in Hebrew and Arabic. His Hebrew work is a polemical book against Saadia under the name of, *The Battles of the Lord* (Milhamoth Adonai). The book takes up mainly the question of the calendar and the fixation of the holidays, but also deals with the observation of the Sabbath and other legal matters, and, as other Karaite scholars, Salmon does not forget to attack the Talmud for the strange Agadic passages wherein God is represented in gross anthropomorphic terms. Salmon is vehement against Saadia and makes reproaches against his personal conduct, which are very unbecoming for a dignified opponent.

Besides this polemical work he wrote a voluminous commentary to Psalms, commentaries to the Five Scrolls, to Daniel and Job and Proverbs and possibly to the Pentateuch. His commentaries were written in Arabic. Salmon was of a fanatical trend of mind, and in his commentary to Psalms, he attacks those who do not devote themselves to the study of the Torah. On the other hand, he was permeated by a deep religious and ethical zeal, and, in his commentaries to the Hagiographa, he inculcates ethical teachings in his explanations of the verses.

v. Another polemical writer as well as exegete and scholar of the tenth century, was Sahl ben Mazliah (second half of the tenth century). He also lived in Jerusalem but, prompted by the zeal of a propagandist, he went to Babylon after Saadia's death, and there carried on a polemic war against the Rabbanites at first in Arabic. His activity called forth a reply from Jacob ben Samuel, a pupil of Saadia, for the refutation of which Sahal wrote a work called an "Open Letter of Reproach" (Tochaht Megulah) in Hebrew. In that book, he attacks the Rabbanites for their apparent laxity in observance of the Sabbath, laws of purity, and other matters. He further questions their source of authority, namely, the Talmud, and points to the many different opinions found in the Mishnah. The style is incomparably superior to the usual Karaite Hebrew style, inasmuch as it is simple and flowing and no attempt is made at rhyme. He wrote also a commentary to the Pentateuch and Isaiah, a book of precepts, and one of laws. According to a later Karaite encyclopedist, he also composed a Hebrew grammar. Sahal, though an exegete and grammarian, was a rigorist and in his codes he is very severe and was one of the scholars who championed the complicated marriage system.

vi. Jephet ben Ali Halevi (end of tenth century), surnamed Al Busari, was the great Karaite exegete. He has performed for the Karaites the same service in Biblical exegesis that Saadia has done for the Rabbanites. He has translated the entire Bible into Arabic and wrote in the same language an extensive commentary to it. His commentary was voluminous, for the part to the Pentateuch alone occupied twenty volumes. A large part of it is still preserved in manuscript. Jephet possessed a keen linguistic sense and great insight into the plain meaning of the Bible and his commentaries possessed great authority for the exegetes who followed him. With the Karaites he was considered *the* commentator and almost every successive exegete followed him and quoted extensively from his works. But even Rabbanite commentators drew considerably upon him. Abraham Ibn Ezra quotes him copiously. He also wrote a Hebrew grammar under the name of Safah Berurah (i. e. the plain language), but little is known of it.

Besides his exegetic works, he also composed two polemical writings, one against Saadia himself and one against Jacob ben Samuel, his disciple mentioned above. The latter one is in rhymed prose. In addition, he also wrote a book of precepts. His son, Levi ben Jephet Halevi, was also known as a scholar and composed in the year 1007 his book of precepts (Sepher ha-Mitzvoth) which is frequently cited by later writers as authoritative. This book, written in Arabic, was later translated into Hebrew. In addition, he also wrote some exegetic pieces to several chapters of Deuteronomy.

vii. The constant interest of the Karaites in the Bible and its interpretation at last brought forth a great grammarian and lexicographer, David ben Abraham Al-Fasi (second half of the tenth century), who hailed, as the surname indicates, from Fas, North Africa. His great work was a dictionary (Agron) covering all words in the Bible alphabetically arranged according to the roots. David ben Abraham still believed, like his great countryman, Judah Ibn Koraish, in the biliteral or even monoliteral theory of Hebrew roots (see above Ch. VII) and his arrangement follows accordingly. The dictionary is written in Arabic, the greatest part of which is still preserved and it is really a valuable contribution to the knowledge of Hebrew as well as Biblical exegesis, for like the dictionaries of Saruk and Ibn Fanach (see above Ch. VII), that of Al-Fasi's also contains a good deal of Biblical exegesis. His method is as follows. At the beginning of each section he gives a list of all the verses of the Bible containing the words which are given in this section, and while explaining the words, he is also explaining the difficult verses. The book is also replete with rules of grammar and remarks on the proper punctuation of Biblical words. He uses the comparative method in deriving the meaning and origin of Hebrew words. Most of his comparisons are with the Arabic, but here and there also with other languages, especially with the Aramaic. David also wrote a book on punctuation and commentaries to Psalms and Canticles. His dictionary was considered authoritative with the Karaites and his successors have repeatedly issued abridged editions of it.

viii. Another grammarian of this period was Abu Alfaraj Aaron of Jerusalem (fl. c. 1002). However, little remained of his grammatical works, except some quotations by later writers who all call him by the surname, the great grammarian. He has also written in Arabic a commentary on the Pentateuch of which a number of quotations survive.

ix. The eleventh century was a very productive one for the Karaite literature. At its very beginning, we meet with a great writer who distinguished himself both in the field of law as well as in exegesis. This writer is Nisi ben Noah (fl. first half of the 11th century). The age of this writer was long disputed. The earlier historians of Karaism such as Pinsker, and those that followed him, including Graetz, considered him an immediate follower of Anan and placed him early in the ninth century. But this has been rejected by later scholars and it is now accepted that he lived in the eleventh century, somewhere in Persia.

Nisi was one of the Karaites who reverted to the use of Hebrew and his works are written in that language. He was a widely traveled man and well educated. He tells of himself that he knew four languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin, besides, of course, Arabic. Yet he chose to write Hebrew, since it is the sacred language. His works consist of an extensive commentary to the Decalogue, where the method so often employed by the Karaites—though employed also by Rabbanites—of deriving all the 613 precepts from the Ten Commandments, is not only followed but the derivation and classification of the precepts logically carried out.[5] This commentary is really an introduction to a book on laws and precepts which he called by a euphemistic name: *The Garden of the Enlightened Ones* (Biton ha-Maskilim). The book of laws itself is lost but the opening remarks are preserved. In these remarks an outline of the divisions of the book is given, from which we can see that the book, at least in its systematic arrangement, excelled many such books by earlier and later Karaites. Nisi was on the whole, a rigorous Karaite, yet, he urges his followers to study Mishnah and Talmud and other halakic books of the Rabbanites. Nisi displays a fair acquaintance with the philosophic notions of his time, refers often to syllogistic forms, and is also acquainted with the division of studies, or sciences. Thus, he speaks in one place of the cycle of studies known throughout the Middle Ages as the quadivivium. This consists of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music. From all this it is evident that he studied philosophy and though he has not written any special book on it, his commentary to the Decalogue is tinged with its spirit. The later Karaite scholars quote him frequently as a great authority on Law.

x. Joseph Al-Basri, i. e. from the city of Basra (d. 1040), is the outstanding Karaite author of the century. He is usually quoted as Joseph Haroe, i. e. the seer, which is supposed to be a reverse name for blind, as the usual Talmudic title, *sage Nahor*, of great light, is applied to blind scholars. Of his life we know very little, except that he traveled much and learned much. Besides Arabic, in which he wrote his books, and Hebrew, he also knew some Greek and uses a number of Greek philosophical terms in his books.

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[5] The question of who was the first one to introduce the method of grouping all the 613 precepts under the Ten Commandments is quite an interesting one. Pinsker, who considers Nisi ben Noah to have lived in the ninth century, makes him the originator and believes that the Gaon Saadia who used this method in his liturgical poem Azharot, only imitated Nisi. But in view of the fact that Nisi really lived at least a century later than Saadia, the preference will have to be given to the latter. It is worth while, however, to point out that this method was originally employed by Philo Judaeus. In this case Saadia utilized a method which was most likely known in his time. See also Ch. XI, note 2.

Joseph holds the distinction of being the only Karaite philosopher of importance during the classical period. He composed three works of a philosophical nature: (a) Thirteen questions, addressed to Jewish and gentile scholars, (b) *The Neimoth* (pleasing discussion, but in Arabic the name is an entirely different one, *Al-Muchtavi fi Al-Usl-Al-Din,* which means a survey of the dogmas of religion), (c) *Machḳimath Peti* (i. e. enlightening the fool). The first work is of little value as it consists of a long list of Bible verses proving the unity of God. Of the other two, the Neimoth contains 35 portals and is supposed to be a book on dogmatics, but the purpose is, however, not carried out completely, as it deals primarily with the conception of God, His attributes and His relation to the world. It contains also polemical matter against erroneous philosophical opinions of various Arabic philosophic sects. *The Machḳimat* deals with the same problems in a briefer and more systematic way and contains 33 portals.

Joseph in his philosophy follows the system of the Kalamite Mutazilites of the Arabs completely and evinces on the whole little originality. His proofs for the existence of God are those of the Kalamite philosophers who proved the existence of God through the creation of things, namely, that all things are created, hence there must be a creator. He believes also, following the Kalam, that God created the world by His will which in turn was also created, a theory which was greatly objected to by later Jewish philosophers, as Joseph Ibn Tzadik (see Ch. XI, Sect. 166) and others. He taught that God possesses essential attributes, which are: living, knowing, potent, and existing. He vigorously defended the justice of God, and, of course, the freedom of man. He was extreme in his defense, so that he even implied that animals, which are slaughtered by men with the permission of God, will get some reward in exchange for their suffering, a view which was greatly influenced by a notion current in Kalam, that even the souls of animals possess some kind of an immortality. Yet, with the exception of these peculiarities, he succeeded in giving, on the whole, a rationalistic view of the most important religious conceptions and his books exerted considerable influence upon the successive religious philosophers. The later Karaite philosophers borrowed extensively from them and the Rabbanite, Joseph Ibn Tzadik, devoted a great part of his book, *The Microcosm,* to combat Al-Basari's views. Besides his philosophical works, Joseph wrote a number of other books, several of them on law. These are the *Book of Light* (Sepher ha-Maor) where various groups of laws are treated, such as circumcision, the fringes, some marriage laws and others; a book of precepts, where the laws are treated in the usual manner of Karaite books of this kind. The ninth section of this book was usually considered a separate treatise on prohibited marriages (Arayoth). To Joseph Al-Basari belongs the credit of initiating a reaction against the extremely cumbersome and complicated prohibited marriage system (Rikkub) of the Karaites. His disciples carried on the struggle for reforms in this direction with much zeal and vigor. He also wrote a book on festivals and on the calendar (Heb. Abib, i. e. spring), where he polemizes against Saadia. His books were mostly written in Arabic, but were later translated into Hebrew, and a number of them are preserved. Al-Basari's opinions on all matters were considered greatly authoritative and are frequently quoted by later writers on all subjects and he was by them styled, the great teacher.

xi. The last great writer of the eleventh century was Yeshuah ben Judah (fl. 1050–1100), known as Abu Al-faraj furkan Ibn Asad, which is the Arabic translation of the Hebrew name (furkan being Arabic for Yeshuah, Asad, lion, for Judah). His literary activity resembles that of Joseph Al-Basari, inasmuch as he was an exegete, a writer on law and philosopher. Joshua lived almost all his life in Jerusalem, but in spite of that he exerted great influence on all Karaitic communities. He was a great propagandist, and he succeeded in drawing pupils from all parts of the world. Among his pupils there were Tobia from Constantinople, and Ibn Teras from Spain. The latter carried on a vigorous propaganda on behalf of Karaism in Spain.

Yeshuah translated the Pentateuch into Arabic and wrote a commentary to it in two recensions, a longer and a shorter one. The shorter commentary to Exodus and Leviticus was translated into Hebrew and is still preserved. Joshua evinced great skill as an exegete and together with Jephet ben Ali was extensively quoted by later commentators, even by the Rabbanites. Ibn Ezra quotes him twenty times in his own commentary to the Pentateuch. From the quotations it is evident, that Joshua endeavored in his commentary to explain the Bible in a logical manner, and in accordance with the rules of grammar and the sense of the language.

In the field of law, his great contribution is the *Book of Righteousness* (Sepher ha-Yashar), a book on prohibited marriages (Arayoth) written in Arabic but later translated into Hebrew by his disciple, Jacob ben Samson. This book is one of the important ones on this matter, inasmuch as Joshua continued the struggle of Joseph Haroe against the rigorousness of the complicated system (Rikkub) and advocated reforms in that matter. The question is gone into in detail, and the opinions of leading scholars, from Anan on, are quoted and analyzed. He also wrote a few philosophical works, a philosophical commentary to Genesis, known as Bershith Rabba, and a book on God and His attributes, by the name of Marpe L'etzem (i. e. medicine to the bones, referring to Proverbs VI, 22 and other places, where words of wisdom are spoken of as a medicine to the soul and body).

186. THE TWELFTH CENTURY

The twelfth century, which was the heyday period of Jewish literature among the Rabbanites, and during which there arose such literary giants as Halevi, Ibn Ezra and Maimonides, to name but a few, was with the Karaites already a period of decline. Yet, though it can not compare with the preceding century, it still retained some of the comparative productivity of the former. It can boast of a few outstanding literary figures whose works were preserved during the generations and which are quoted by later writers. It is to be noted, though, that the center of literary activity was removed to Byzantium, and Constantinople became the literary capital of Karaism instead of Jerusalem, or Babylonian cities. This can be explained by the fact that the Karaite settlement in Palestine dispersed, with the beginning of that century, during the persecutions of the crusaders who held the country at that time, while the Babylonian Karaite centers suffered from the effects of the general decline of that Jewry.

i. Among the leading literary figures of this new center the first one was Tobiah ben Moses who is surnamed Haobed, i. e. the God-fearing man, a title which he acquired on account of his great piety. Tobiah lived in Constantinople at the beginning of the twelfth century. We know little of his life except that in his youth he studied at Jerusalem under Joshua ben Judah. He distinguished himself especially as a translator of his teacher's books, as well as that of Joseph Albasari's, to whose philosophical works he also made some additions. He himself wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch in Hebrew under the title, *This Torah* (Zoth ha-Torah). Some scholars ascribe to him also a book of precepts under the name, *Let there be Light* (Yehi meoroth), which is in the form of legal discussions on selected verses of the Pentateuch which contain precepts and commandments, but there is doubt whether Tobiah is really the author of this book.

ii. Another writer of this new literary center is one by the name of Elijah ben Abraham, who, as it seems from his writings, also lived somewhere in Byzantium in the middle of the twelfth century. Of his works we have one left, which is entitled: *The Division between the Karaites and the Rabbanites* (Hiluk ha-Karaim V'ha-Rabanim). It is a small work of a historical nature, and purports to establish the antiquity of the Karaites. He repeats the assertion already advanced by Kirkisani (Sect. 183) that the division between the Rabbanites and the Karaites dates from the time of Jeroboam and that the Rabbanites are, so to say, his followers. He adds, however, a new note, by saying that a part of the followers of the true religion left Palestine, at that early date, and went to Ethiopia in order to be able to observe Judaism in its purity, while another part remained in Jerusalem and clung tenaciously to the Torah in its pristine state. It goes, of course, without saying that the Karaites are the descendants of these selected few. He is, though, not very certain of his rather bold assertions, and in several places, he concedes that it is possible that the Karaitic schism is of later origin, and it may be even assumed that Anan was its founder. He insists, however, that this origin does in no way impair the authenticity of their beliefs, for he claims that divisions were always going on among the Rabbanites, such as the division between the Pharisees and Sadducees, Beth Shamai and Beth Hillel and others. In general, the whole work bears an apologetic character and characterizes a feeling of weakness and inferiority. Its main importance consists in a list of Karaite scholars and leaders from the time of Anan to his own day. The list is not above reproach, yet it contains valuable information.

iii. The greatest writer of this period and one of the greatest authors of the entire Karaite literature was Judah ben Elijah Hadasi, surnamed Haabel (i. e. the mourner, a title often assumed by Karaite savants on account of their mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem). Of his life we know little except that he lived during the middle of the twelfth century in Constantinople. His education was a most complete one. Besides Hebrew he also had a fair knowledge of Greek, inasmuch as Greek words and phrases abound in his book. He was versed in the entire Karaitic literature up to his day and also studied the Talmud and the Rabbinic literature; besides, he studied philosophy and all other sciences of the day. His was an encyclopedic mind and he absorbed all knowledge of the generation. All this knowledge he poured forth in his Magnum Opus, *Eshkol ha-Kopher* (i. e. a cluster of camphire, a phrase found in Canticles 1, 13, and it is probably applied to the book on account of its encyclopedic character, for Eshkol was used in the Talmudic literature in such a meaning), which was composed in 1148.

The book is a veritable encyclopedia and, as said, it contains all knowledge, law, dogmatics, philosophy, exegesis, grammar, and even astronomy, zoölogy and other sciences. It is, of course, superfluous to say that it contains a good deal of polemics and intends to defend the correctness of the Karaitic theory and views on all subjects, against the Rabbanites. Its arrangement and order is a peculiar one, but more unique is its form. It is written entirely in rhymes and each section is according to the alphabetical arrangement, namely, that each verse begins with a letter of the alphabet. For the sake of variety, the alphabet is frequently reversed, namely, that instead of the first verse beginning with Aleph and the last one ending with Tau, the former begins with Tau and the latter ends with Aleph. This arrangement is usually known as *Tashrak* (i. e. Tau, Shin, Resh, Kuf). To complicate the matter, some sections have instead of the alphabetic acrostic, an acrostic of the author's name as well as his father's. Each few verses have a monotonous rhyme of *cho* (i. e. the final kaf) which forces Hadasi to add the suffix to words that do not require it, and of course adds another difficulty to the reader. Bound by such complications, it is really to be wondered at how Hadasi was able to execute such a voluminous work, inasmuch as the book contains 379 long sections. It, of course, testifies to his skill in Hebrew, but it makes his style, though on the whole pure Hebrew, difficult and hard to understand on account of the twistings and turnings, and artificial chains placed on it.

Yet, in spite of the fact that the form of the book is rather peculiar, its content is of exceptional value. As said, it covers almost every subject ever touched upon in Jewish literature. The method employed is the one already referred to, which was used by a former Karaite writer, Nisi ben Noah (Sect. 183), that of grouping all precepts and all religious knowledge under the Ten Commandments. The book, therefore, is really divided into ten unequal parts. But Hadasi is not strict, he interprets each commandment in the widest possible sense, and often includes such subjects which apparently have no relation to the commandment at all, but are included only by resemblance to other subjects which really do fall under that commandment.

Thus, he opens his book with the laws relating to the praise of God, namely, all laws of prayer as well as the order of prayer and benedictions at various occasions, such as benedictions pronounced on food, on drinks, those pronounced at marriage ceremonies and others. This subject is treated first, for the first commandment, "I am the Lord thy God," implies, first of all, the duty of man to praise God. But Hadasi knows no limitation, and while speaking of the benedictions of betrothal and marriage he begins to discuss the forms of betrothal and marriage themselves. Of course, these subjects are treated again, in extenso, under the proper commandment, and thus there is a good deal of duplication. But the knowledge of God involved in this commandment includes a good deal more than prayer and benedictions. It involves a conception of God, His attributes, His actions, His conduct of the world, relation to man and man's relation to Him, so Hadasi launches upon a wide sweep of subjects. In a number of sections he unfolds an entire religious philosophy, discusses the attributes of God, the anthropomorphic expressions of the Bible, revelation at Sinai, prophecy, God's justice, reward and punishment, and penitence and its conditions. Since God is primarily the creator of the world, he deemed it necessary to include a number of sections on the world and its wonders, touching on astronomy and physics, and from the inanimate world, he passes over the animate, and gives an epitome of his zoölogical knowledge, incorporating, of course, all the absurdities current in the Middle Ages, regarding some strange animals. Hadasi, is also a great antagonist of the Rabbanites, and does not forget to include, while discussing the purity of the God conception, all the anthropomorphic passages of the Talmud and the mystical books and tabulates them, in order to show, of course, the errors of the antagonists. Thus, the chain widens and the first commandment alone swells into a fair-sized book.

In this way he continues until he practically exhausts all law and all religious knowledge. It would be useless to follow him in his constant swelling discussions. We will only cite a few more examples illustrating his peculiar encyclopedic method. Under the second commandment:

"Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," he includes besides discussion on laws of idolatry, a history of all sects in Judaism that have arisen from early times to his day. Here, too, he finds space to discuss all kinds of sorcery, as well as forms of superstitions, and naturally attacks the Rabbanites for their forsaking the path of true Torah, and again gives a long list of Talmudic passages which he turns into rhyme, and claims that they defamed the prophets and other Biblican heroes, ascribing to them imaginary sins. These charges are again repeated under the ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy friend."

In the fourth commandment of the Sabbath, under which are included the discussions of all laws of the Sabbath and all festivals, he enters, of course, into controversy with the Rabbanites for their interpretations of these laws. But this controversy brings him to a long discussion of the laws of interpretations of the Torah. He magnifies the hermenutic rules to eighty and is involved in the question of punctuation. This makes him give a complete treatise on grammar and punctuation.

Again, while subsuming all laws of inheritance, mourning and kindred subjects under the fifth commandment, "Honor thy father and mother," he also includes discussions of human conduct in general, how one should conduct himself towards society, the poor, elders, officers, teachers and all other social relations. Similarly, under the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not murder," all criminal laws and those of damages are discussed, under the seventh all family laws and kindred subjects. Thus, his discussions constantly swell and include all tributaries of knowledge. It is no wonder that Hadasi's book was considered in great esteem, by later generations, as it was an inexhaustible source of information, and was supplied by a later scholar, Kaleb Apopondopolo, with a detailed table of contents.

Of the characteristics of Hadasi's philosophical teachings, these are to be noted: First, that he is practically the only Karaite philosopher in this period who accepted the four elements as the basis of the physical world. All previous philosophers followed the Calam in accepting the atomic theory, namely, that the physical world consists of innumerable small particles moving in the void, which are constantly being created by God and destroyed. Secondly, that he followed Nahawendi in teaching that the angels were created first, and that they performed many of the functions often ascribed, in the Bible, to God. In general, wherever it is said, God descended, saw etc., it refers to an angel. Even the very descent on Sinai was performed by an angel, except the voice was God's. Thirdly, that among the ten articles of faith or principles of religion he counts also the duty to know Hebrew, the language of the Torah, as well as its exegesis.

Returning once more to the book, it is to be noted that besides its varied content, it possesses invaluable importance for its hundreds of quotations from Karaitic writers. Hadasi has drawn on the entire Karaitic literature, and he quotes many books that are now lost, and the only information we have about them is the Eshkol Hakopher. It thus serves us as a guide to Karaite literature and its teachings. With this encyclopedia, the classic period of Karaite literature is closed.

Chapter XIV

HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVEL

187. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The historical literature of the Jews, during the earlier period of the Middle Ages, can, very often, be called historical only by courtesy. As is well known, the science of history in the modern sense was entirely unknown during the first half of the Middle Ages. Not only was the critical faculty absent with the writers of history in those days, but they even lacked the ability of telling a connected story wherein the concatenation of events should be pointed out and demonstrated. Most of the "histories" of the period are merely chronicles of events, or lists of kings and other outstanding personalities in a more or less consecutive order, interspersed with stories of miracles and curious happenings. There is very seldom an attempt to sift the facts or doubt the narratives. Credulity, which was a fundamental characteristic of Mediæval life, reigns supreme in these histories. All that the narrators of former generations related was respectfully incorporated in these chronicles or histories. And the same can be said about the Jewish historical books of the period, that they display, with few exceptions, the same characteristics, and often in a marked degree. The Jewish people in exile, lacking a united national life, could not well produce a real history. Its memories clustered around the lives of its outstanding personalities who, for a long time, were either the scholars, or the chiefs of exile and patriarchs. Hence a large number of these histories contain merely the lists of generations of scholars and especially the leaders of these generations. Only in such cases where the historian turns to the earlier period of Jewish life, namely, the one before the destruction of the Temple, we get a more or less connected history. Yet this is not the rule, these books are not always dry. We have also a few small works dealing with phases of life in certain periods, and thus giving us a reflection of that life. As the ages speed on and suffering becomes the very woof of Jewish life in exile, the histories or chronicles assume a more somber aspect, they become gloomy narratives of martyrdom and persecutions, or lists of martyrs and massacres.

The books which deserve the name of histories deal mainly with Jewish life, but inasmuch as that life was inherently interwoven with the general life, we catch here and there glimpses of that life too. Certain events of the peoples among whom the Jews lived are narrated, kings are mentioned and data given. At times we have even a book here and there dealing entirely with the history of other nations. We must also note, that the line drawn between history and geography is really an arbitrary one, for many of these books classed as geographical can be just as well denoted historical. The travelers who supply us with the geographical data, really dwell more on the life of the people in the Jewish communities they visited and describe it in a detailed manner. Their books are thus excellent sources for Jewish history of the periods in which they were written. We have therefore drawn the line, in many cases, only for convenience sake and it does not represent a real distinction. To say that these geographical books and especially the tales of travels, suffer from the same defects as those in history, is almost superfluous, for credulity and lack of exactitude were just as much common vices of the travelers and geographers, as of the historians.

Yet, with all their shortcomings, these books are of great value, inasmuch as they serve as the sources of Jewish history and often are the only means through which we can get a glimpse at the past life of the people. As historical material they do not fall behind other "historical documents" which are the bases of the histories of other nations, and it is left for the historian to sift out the truth from them by the usual methods. There is, on the whole, a common virtue to these chronicles and histories, for with few exceptions, they are written from a more or less objective point of view, inasmuch as Jewish historians had no courts or nobles to flatter. Yet there is, of course, personal bias, and as stated, there are exceptions.

A. History

188. ANONYMOUS WORKS

i. The first of these kind of works is a small chronicle called *Seder Olam Zuta* (i. e. the brief order of the world). It is named so, because it follows in method and form the older chronicle by that name composed by the Tanna of the second century, Jose ben Halaphta (See Ch. IV, Sect. 72), except that it is much briefer. The author seemed to have a special aim, namely, to prove the direct descendancy of the exilarchs in

Babylon, until a certain time, from David. For this purpose, he gives a list of generations from Adam to that time, mentioning chiefly the outstanding personalities in each generation. He pays little attention to events, only stating a few. According to him, the office of the exilarch in Babylon began with Zerubbabel, the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who returned thither after he built the Temple at Jerusalem. He gives a complete list of the exilarchs from Zerubbabel down to about the eighth century, from which it is to be concluded that the book was written about the end of that century. As to this chief contribution of his, namely, the names of the exilarchs in that long list, it is doubtful whether a large number of them are really historical. It is believed that the names of the exilarchs from Zerubbabel down to Huna, who died about the end of the second century C. E., are purely fictitious. First, we do not know whether the Jews in Babylon had any such officer as an exilarch, during the first six centuries of their settlement there. The first reference to an exilarch, in the Talmud, is in the time of Simon ben Gamaliel, during the second half of the second century, while Huna who is mentioned by name there, died about the end of that century.

There seems to be more historical value to the names of exilarchs from Huna down, and the events of the later period and the names of the later generations of exilarchs possess real value. The author closes the list of exilarchs, in office, with Mar Zutra the second about 420 C. E. who left Babylon and settled in Palestine on account of persecution. He gives, however, the names of eight more descendants of the Davidic house, but these seemed not to hold that office of exilarch, as they lived in Palestine. The office of the exilarch continued in Babylon to the middle of the ninth century, and really began its more glorious period from Bustanai who rose to the office, at the conquest of Persia by Ali in 641, but of all these later exilarchs there is no mention in our book. It is therefore concluded that the author was dominated by the tendency to show that the Bustanai line of exilarchs was not descended from David, inasmuch as the original dynasty terminated in Palestine by the flight of Marzutra II. It will thus prove to be one of the exceptions, namely, a historical book written with a tendency.

ii. Another small work of this kind is the *Seder Tannaim Vamoraim* (i. e. the order of the Tannaim and Amoraim) referred to above (see Ch. X, Sect. 157). The book was composed about the end of the ninth century and emanates from a Gaonic school. It contains, besides the methodological part discussed above, also a historical part, as it gives lists of all the patriarchs in Palestine from Hillel to the abolition of the patriarchate, of the generations of Tannaim of the Mishnah and the heads of each generation, of the Amoraim and the scholars immediately succeeding them, the Saburaim. It is to be noted that the list of the Palestinian Amoraim is very incomplete, only a few of them are mentioned. The book is found in several versions, and was used as a source book by subsequent historians.

iii. The most important work of this class, is the one known as *Josippon* (i.e. the smaller Josephus). The book purports to be a condensed account of Josephus' historical works written by Josephus himself. It is strange, however, that Josephus is not called here the son of Mattathias as in his books, but the son of Gorion, the name of one of the Jewish generals and governors of Jerusalem in the early stage of the war. The book is thus a historical pseudo-epigraphic work. It was compiled, as it is evident, from a number of sources among which was, most likely, a Latin translation of Josephus' works. It may also be possible that the compiler did not use Josephus' work itself but only the book of Hegessipus, an abridgment of that work composed in the fourth century. Besides the work of Josephus, or Hegessipus, the author drew upon Roman historians, especially Titus Livius, for items of Roman history, upon the life of Alexander the Great written by Archpresbyter Leo, in the middle of the tenth century, and other works.

The facts that the author of *Josippon* has already been acquainted with books written about the middle of the tenth century, as well as his mentioning such European nations as the Danes, Irish, Burgundians, and other geographical data, which could only be known by one who lived in the last century of the first millennium of the common era, determine approximately the date of the composition of the book. It is placed around the year 960.

As to the place of its composition all evidences point to Southern Italy. The author's acquaintance with European geography, with Latin books, the number of Latin words as well as the Latinized forms of names and places, show that he lived in a European country. On the other hand, he shows also an acquaintance with Arabic literature and culture, and such a wide knowledge of both the Occidental and Oriental cultures could only be acquired by a man who lived in Southern Italy, in the tenth century, where both cultures were known.

The book is not a chronicle but a regular, well-connected history. In the fashion of the day, it begins with Adam, gives a brief genealogy to the children of Noah and then deals extensively with the table of nations in Genesis Ch. X, giving a geographical description of the distribution of the nations mentioned in the table. In this geographical description he shows a wide knowledge. He knows of the Germans but calls them peculiarly enough by their French name, Allemand, of the Russians who dwell on the Dnieper, of the Slavs, Danes and other nations. While he identifies the *Kitim,* of the Table of Nations, with the Romans, he starts to tell about early Roman history and brings that down to the time of the fall of Jerusalem. This leads, of course, to his main purpose, the narrative of Jewish history.

There follows, then, the story of Cyrus, very embellished, and Cambyses, of Daniel and his exploits, taken from the apocryphal writings, additions to Daniel (Ch. I, Sect. 4), the story of Zerubbabel and the building of the Temple, and the story of Esther. All of these episodes of early Jewish history are greatly embellished by the apocryphal tales. From Darius a jump is made to Alexander and his relation to the Jews. Alexander must have been a favorite of our author, as he was generally the favorite in the Middle Ages. He devotes to his life a considerable number of pages giving it in great detail, incorporating the well-known romance of Alexander. His successors, however, he treats briefly but does give a short chronicle of Roman history up to Augustus.

From then on he devotes himself to Jewish history, beginning with the reigns of Seleucus in Syria and Ptolemy in Egypt, he gives first the story of the Septuagint translations, and continues in detailed manner up to the destruction of the Temple. In this last part, the author interrupts his narrative of Jewish history only a few times to tell of a few outstanding episodes in Roman history. These are the story of Hannibal, of Cæsar, and that of the ravishing of Paulina, illustrating the moral corruption of Rome in the time of Tiberius, and the coronation of the king.

The book, on the whole, contains a good deal of genuine historical material, but much of it is mixed with legends and tales common to that period. He, like all writers of the period, identifies Biblical personages with the heroes of Roman history. Thus he makes a grandson of Esau, *Zepho,* one of the founders of Rome. The style of the book is pure Hebrew, and only here and there, it is interspersed with expressions of Midrashic language. On the whole, it is a fair specimen of historical prose. It is flowing, elastic and smooth. In some places it betrays attempts at translating Latin phrases into Hebrew.

Josippon was well received and became popular. The first reference in Hebrew literature to the book is by Dunash ben Tamim (Ch. VIII, Sect. 94), a tenth century man. It must have been translated into Arabic early, for an Arabic writer, Ibn Hazam, who died in 1063, already quotes a long excerpt from it. From the eleventh century on, it is quoted and referred to almost by every important author, such as Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Kimhi and many others. During the ages it was the favorite book of the Jewish Youth who drew their historical knowledge from it.

iv. To this class of anonymous historical works belongs also one more book, though it hardly deserves that name, as it is primarily one of historical legends or Agada. This is the *Sepher ha-Yashar* (i.e. Book of the Righteous), an embellished story of the early part of Biblical history, namely, from Adam to Joshua. The author collected all legends, tales and stories connected with Biblical events or persons of that period and intertwined them with the narrative. It seems that his purpose was to compose a popular story book which should attract the readers and thus acquaint them with a part of the Bible. He has drawn from all sources, Apocryphal books, Talmud and Midrash. In fact, all kinds of Midrashim, some that are lost today, *Josippon,* the letters of the Khazar king (see below B) and even from Arabic sources. He was anxious, however, to give it authenticity of antiquity and hence the name Sepher Hayashar, as a book by that name is mentioned in Joshua X, 13 and second Samuel IV, 18 as a book of history. In fact the first editor who printed the book in 1625 at Naples, Joseph ben Samuel of Fez, tells a legendary story about the origin of the book, that it was found at Jerusalem, at the time of the destruction of the Temple and later brought to Seville. It is called there also by another name, Toldoth Adam (i.e. history of Adam).

The book was, most likely, composed in Spain in the twelfth century. The first is proven, besides the notice in the introduction, also from the fact that the author is well acquainted with Arabic, as he uses a large number of Arabic names to denominate the children of Ismael and also from other evidence. He also uses philosophical terms current in Spanish Jewish literature. The second, namely, the date, is determined by the fact that the eleventh and first half of the twelfth century scholars have no reference to it. It is only from the thirteenth century on that it is referred to.

The author is very detailed in his narrative and is painstakingly careful to supply names of all children of the persons mentioned in the Bible as well as the names of their wives. He even did not forget to give the names of the witnesses to the deed of Abraham to the cave of Machpelah. He is likewise careful in supplying dates to events of the period, though such are not mentioned in the Bible. He must have drawn on the Book of Jubilees (Ch. I, Sect. 23) in such matters. This book, like *Josippon,* was very popular and is preserved in many versions. Since its first edition in 1625, it was reprinted many times. Its style is likewise pure Hebrew with a slight admixture of Aramaic words. It is an exceptionally fine specimen of Hebrew prose, possessing a soft beauty.

189. CHRONICLES OF RABBI NATHAN

The first historical book which bears the name of its author is one by a scholar, Nathan the Babylonian, called the Order of the Academies. Rabbi Nathan was a contemporary of Saadia Gaon, and he found it necessary to record the events of his time and depict the cultural life of the age. The book has something like two parts, one dealing with a description of the important institutions of the day, namely, the two academies, Sura and Pumbedita, their manner of study there, the office of the Gaonate and functions. Next comes a description of the office of exilarchate, its functions and privileges. We have also a detailed record of the sources of income of each of the academies, and of the exilarch, together with a description of the ceremony of induction of the exilarch in office.

The second part records the important historical events of the period, the first being a quarrel between the Gaon Cohen Zedeck and the exilarch Ukba, the second, the strife between the exilarch David ben Zakkai and the Gaon Saadia. The historical value of the book is very great, for besides that it gives an authentic account of a contemporary of an important episode in the life of Saadia, it gives a real picture of the intellectual and political life of the Jews of Babylonia. Nathan's description of the Academies and of the Judicial and communal affairs of the Babylonian Jewry holds good not only for his time but for the entire Gaonic period. We thus really gain an insight into the inner life of these two former great workshops of Jewish learning of that great period.

The book was preserved in Hebrew and for a long time it was thought that Rabbi Nathan wrote his work in Hebrew. Of late, however, an Arabic fragment of Nathan's records was discovered, and it is now thought that Nathan wrote his work in Arabic and that the Hebrew is a translation.

There has been discovered also another fragment in Arabic containing the story of a leader of the Bagdad Jewish community, Natira, and his sons, telling of their high position at court during the reign of the Abbaside Caliphs, Almutadhid, and Al-Muktadir (892–932), their conduct, and their generosity. This story is also ascribed to Nathan and it is suggested that it was a part of a larger work.

190. THE LETTER OF SHERIRA GAON

A more important historical work, since it is more complete, is the famous *Letter of Sherira Gaon* (920–1000). This work was written as an answer to a query addressed to the famous Gaon by Jacob ben Nisim from Kairuan, in the year 986, consisting of a number of questions affecting the authenticity of the Mishnah and Talmud and the sequence of tradition. The questions were as follows: First, how was the Mishnah written? namely, was the Mishnah written down little by little from the time of the Great Assembly (Kenesseth Hagedolah) on, until Judah the Prince finally closed it (as Saadia maintained), or did Judah write it altogether? In this case, the question arises, why did the earlier scholars leave the task to the later ones? Second, is there any reason for the arrangement of the tractates in each order? Third, what is the purpose of the Tosefta (additional collection), why did Judah himself not incorporate it in the Mishnah, and how were the Baraitoth (Ch. V, Sect. 59) written? Fourth, how was the Talmud written down? Fifth, what is the sequence of scholars, namely, the Saburaim and Gaonim, to Sherira's time?

The people of Kairuan were motivated to ask this series of questions because of their constant argumentation with the Karaites, who questioned the authenticity of the Mishnah and Talmud and claimed to have possessed versions of Bariatoth, or even whole collections of them which differed in a number of matters from the teachings imparted in the Mishnah and Talmud. The people of Kairuan were therefore very anxious to know all about the Mishnah and Talmud, the manner of Halakic tradition, the nature of the composition of these books, as well as about the scholars who continued the chain of tradition after the close of the Talmud.

To these all comprehensive questions, Sherira wrote an equally comprehensive answer. His epistle falls, therefore, into two parts. The first dealing with the four questions affecting the manner of composition and order of the Talmudic literature, and the second dealing with the fifth question, the chronological sequence of the post-Talmudic scholars.

He deals with the questions seriatim. First, he takes up the authenticity of tradition, explains that there was an uninterrupted chain of tradition from the men of the Great Assembly and each generation handed down the principal halakahs to the other. At first there was little necessity to write anything down, for there was little difference of opinion and they could well continue their study orally. It is only after the destruction of the Temple, when times were turbulent, that differences began, and as time went on the differences multiplied, so that it became necessary to collect halakoth, arrange them and write them down. This is the gist of his answer to the question why the Mishnah was not ordered and arranged and written down until the time of Judah the Prince, though its main material is old. He then goes on to explain the nature of the Mishnah, the relation of Judah's work to earlier collections, especially Rabbi Meir's, the order of the tractates and the nature of the Tosefta. He also describes the work of the Amoraim, the meaning of the concept Talmud and its method, for which he claims great antiquity. In the discussion of all these questions, Sherira also deals with the order of succession of the Tannaim and Amoraim, and also gives a large number of methodological data which helps us greatly to understand the mechanism of the Talmud.

The second part, which deals with the last question regarding the order and sequence of the generation of leading scholars from the close of the Talmud to his own day, is of great importance. Here Sherira becomes the only source for the history of intellectual life in Babylon from the year 500 to 1000. He introduces his real subject, however, by giving a list of all patriarchs from Hillel to Judah, as well as a detailed chronological list of the leading Babylonian Amoraim, noting their time of office, to the close of the Talmud. From there on he becomes more detailed and chronicles in regular succession all the Saburaim and Gaonim, who served as heads of the Academies. He is careful to tabulate the heads of each academy separately, namely, he enumerates the Gaonim of Pumbedita, for a certain period, and then takes up those of Sura, for the same period, and so on.

His chronicle is not dry, for he records the important events of the time, the institutions and legal reforms of the Gaonim, and all other matters of historical value. The sources employed by Sherira were the archives of the academy of Pumbedita, as well as oral reports that were current in his time regarding the lives and deeds of earlier Gaonim. He possessed a keen historical sense in selecting materials, and his epistle thus has great validity and authenticity. The style of the letter is the usual mixed Aramaic employed in the Talmud and all Gaonic responsa.

Of the Epistle of Sherira we possess two versions, one emanating from the Spanish school and one from the French school. The versions differ in a number of things but their chief difference centers about the passages that refer to the writing down of the Mishnah by Judah, as well as the Talmud by Rabbi Ashi. The Spanish version states explicitly, in a number of places, that Judah not only edited and compiled the Mishnah, but actually wrote it down. All these passages are so changed in the French version, as to leave no reference to the writing down of the Mishnah by Judah. They state only that he arranged and placed its material in order but pass over in silence the writing down. It is believed by scholars that the Spanish version is the correct one, as the Spanish scholars were in close touch with the Gaonim, and they undoubtedly received the letter directly either from Babylonia, or from the people Kairuan to whom the epistle was sent and with whom the early Spanish scholars, such as Samuel Ibn Nagrela (Ch. VIII), were in close touch. Thus, Nisim, the son of Jacob, the one who addressed the inquiry to Sherira was the father-in-law of Joseph, the son of Samuel, and most likely, Samuel had an authentic copy of the original letter. On the other hand, we know that the French scholars abhorred the idea that such an important part of the oral law as the Mishnah should have been written down as early as Judah the Prince. They preferred to have the writing down of the oral law deferred as late as possible, for the Talmud states distinctly that the oral law is not allowed to be written down. It is, therefore, surmised that copyists of the French school consciously or unconsciously changed the passages in Sherira's letter so that they might conform with their views on the matter.

191. THE CHRONICLE OF AHIMAATZ

Among the various discoveries made by Jewish scholars, in the last few decades, in the field of Jewish literature, there is also a historical chronicle which sheds light upon the life and history of the Jews of Southern Italy during the ninth and tenth centuries. This chronicle, known as *The Chronicle of Ahimaatz,* the name of the writer, was published by Adoloph Neubauer, in 1895, from a unique manuscript in the library of the cathedral at Toledo, Spain. The chronicle was written in the year 1054 by Ahimaatz, a descendant of a family of great Jewish leaders, scholars and famous sacred poets (Paitanim). It is really more of a family chronicle, aiming to tell of the vicissitudes of the fortunes of the various members of the family, for two hundred years. But the author, in telling the fortunes of that family, tells the history of the Jews in Southern Italy, for the members of that family were their leaders. The founders of the family were Rabbi Amitai, and his son, Rabbi Shephatia, both of whom were known Paitanim, whose sacred poems (piutim) were incorporated in the prayer books of the Italian and German Jews. Another member of the family was one Rabbi Paltiel, who, through his acquaintance with the Mohammedan governor of Sicily, entered the service of the Fatimide Caliphs in Northern Africa and rose to be the counselor of several caliphs. Under Al Moizz he moved, together with him, to Egypt and became also the prince of the Jews of all the Jewries in the empire including that of Palestine. From that chronicle, we learn many events of Jewish life in Southern Italy during the two centuries. There is a record of the persecution of the Jews in that province under Basilius, emperor of Byzantium, who ruled at that time also over Southern Italy, of the kindness shown to the Jews by his successor, Leo VI, and of the invasion of Calabria by the Saracens. There are also many glimpses of the inner Jewish life. From it we learn of the judicial autonomy of the Jews of that province, and several cases are recorded when Jewish courts have condemned criminals to death, in accordance with Jewish law. We also learn that Southern Italy was a great center of Jewish learning, that sacred poetry was highly developed there, and that mysticism was held in high esteem and that many scholars devoted themselves to practical application of mystic teachings. There are a number of legends told about various men who performed miracles aplenty, and the stories are told, as a matter of fact, as usual occurrences. The chronicle also reveals to us the close communication between the Jews of Italy and Palestine. It seems that Jews of Southern Italy used to make frequent pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and these served as the channel of influence of Palestine on the lands of the Diaspora. They kept also in touch with Babylonia. There is mention also of a Babylonian scholar, Rabbi Aaron, who arrived in Oria, a town in that province, and established an academy there. This Aaron was also a great mystic as well as a composer of sacred poetry. He figures, in later writings, as the one who taught the art of *Piut* to the Jews of Italy, and he most likely also introduced the teaching of mysticism to the Jews of Europe. The chronicle is written in rhymed prose and is a fine example of Paitanic style.

192. CRUSADE CHRONICLES

Of the terrible persecutions that the Jews of Germany have suffered during the Crusades, we have several records and chronicles. There are five of them. Three relate the events of the first Crusade, the fourth one, of the second and the fifth, of the persecution in Mayence in the years 1187–88.

The first one is the chronicle of Solomon ben Simon of Mayence. Of the life of the author we know little, save that, as he tells us himself, he lived in that city and that he wrote his chronicle in the year 1140. He tells in detail of the massacres perpetrated by the crusaders at Worms, Mayence, Speyer, Cologne and a few other cities. He gives the names of the martyrs and the story of their martyrdom, how men, women and children gladly and willingly sacrificed themselves for the sanctification of the name of God. He is, of course, bitter against the murderers and constantly invokes God to avenge the innocent blood. He, therefore, tells, rather gleefully, the story of the defeat of certain armies of Crusaders in Hungary and how they were cut down by the Byzantians. To this original document there is a later addition telling of the massacre at Blois, France, as a result of the first blood accusation in the year 1171.

The second one is a shorter record of the same events by Eliezer ben Nathan, a famous Talmudic scholar and codifier (see Ch. X, Sect. 153), also of Mayence. He must have been an eye-witness of these horrors, but records them in a more general way, giving fewer names of the martyrs. There is no date given, yet it is certain that Eliezer wrote before 1146 when the second Crusade took place. The chronicle contains also a few elegiac poems over the fates of these martyrs, of his own composition.

The third one is an anonymous record of the events of the first Crusade and adds but little new. In general, there is much resemblance among all these three sources, and much speculation was aroused which one is the earlier. But it is assumed that all three probably wrote independently, most likely using common sources, either oral or written.

These three records often differ in names of martyrs and one document at times contains certain data missing in the others, so that they complete each other.

The fourth one, written by Ephraim of Bonn (1132–1200), is divided into two parts, the first one called "Book of Records or Memorials" (Sepher Zichronoth) contains the records of the persecution during the second Crusade. He is very general and does not limit himself to Germany but tells also of events in France and England. He records also the story how the great Tosafist Jacob of Rameru (Tam) was saved from death by a knight of his acquaintance. This part was written in the sixties of the twelfth century. In the second part Ephraim records a series of persecutions and attacks which happened subsequent to the second Crusade, at various times and places. He mentions the Blois accusation of 1171, the massacre of the Jews in London at the time of the coronation of Richard Cœur de Lion in 1190, and other events. The latest events he reports are the scattered attacks on Jews which came as after effects of the third Crusade in 1196.

The fifth report is written by Eliezer ben Judah of Worms, the famous scholar, codifier and mystic (see Ch. XI, Sect. 173). It is a mere fragment describing an attack on the Jews at Mayence in the years 1187–88 which occurred at the beginning of the third Crusade.

All these reports are of great historical value as they were written either by eye-witnesses or contemporaries of the events, or at least by those who lived immediately after their occurrence. They are our sources for these gloomy episodes in Jewish history.

193. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS OF ABRAHAM IBN DAUD

In Abraham Ibn David, the well-known philosopher (Ch. XI, Sect. 172), we have likewise a great historian, taking in consideration that his shortcomings are principally due to the peculiar conception of history which prevailed in the Mediæval Ages in general. He left us three works, the first being the "Order or Book of Tradition" (Seder, or Sepher Hakabalah), the second, "The History of the Jewish Kings in the Second Commonwealth," the third, "The History of Rome" (Zikaron Divre Romi).

"The Book of Tradition" is his principal work as it is the largest, most complete and most original. It was written, as he himself states, for the purpose of combating the erroneous opinion of the Karaites who deny the authenticity of tradition. He, therefore, proposes to give in brief an account of the chain of tradition, namely, the history of the leading scholars from the time of the Great Assembly to his own days. The book was written in the year 1160–61. He is, therefore, not interested, as far as this book is concerned, in political history, and supplemented it by his second book. The first parts of this book up to the close of the Talmud are very brief, and with the exception of a few digressions, he gives only the names and dates of the traducers of the law and a few biographical data. For the periods of Saburaim, Gaonim and that of the Spanish scholars, he grows more eloquent and gives a good many details of Jewish life in general.

The book opens by way of introduction with a short chronological and genealogical list from Adam to Judah the Prince. In this list he gives also the names of the princes of the exile (exilarchs), during the Second Commonwealth up to Hillel, following the lists of the short *Seder Olam* (Sect. 186). He then begins the order of tradition with Moses and comes immediately to the men of the Great Assembly, following the order given in Abboth (sayings of the Fathers). The mention of great synagogues brings him to a digression, where he discusses chronological questions of the length of the first exile, the period of the second Temple and relates these questions to the prophecy of Daniel (Ch. IX). He then begins with Simon the Just and follows up the chain of tradition to the generation succeeding Judah the Prince, counting a total of fourteen generations of traducers, nine before the destruction of the Temple and five generations of Tannaim. He begins the period of Tannaim with Raban Gamaliel the second, of Jammia, and ends with Hanina ben Hama, who followed Judah as head of the academy. In giving the leaders of the generations of traducers he, as a rule, gives the names of their important fellow-scholars. He also digresses often in discussions of certain questions. Thus, when telling of Simon the Great he tells of his meeting with Alexander the Great as embellished in the Talmud; speaking of Antigonous, the follower of Simon, he tells about the rise of the Sadducean and Bethusian sects, which according to a notice in Abotdi R. Nathan, were founded by Zadok and Baithus, disciples of Antigonous. While mentioning Joshua ben Porachia, he mentions the Talmudic tradition that he was the teacher of Jesus, and is greatly perplexed how to reconcile this tradition, which antedates the birth of Jesus 110 years, with the real date. He proposes that there were two Joshuas, one at the time of Hillel.

The next period, that of the Amoraim, is dealt with more in detail. On the whole, with the exception of Rabbi Johanan of Palestine, to whom he devotes a few lines mentioning also that he compiled the Palestinian Talmud, the section is devoted to the Babylonian scholars. Of these Amoraim he counts seven generations. While telling of the persecution of the Jews in Babylon in the fifth century, he gives a brief sketch of the history of the Persians and correlates certain events with dates and episodes in Roman history. The history of the Saburaim follows next. He counts five generations of these scholars and differs thus from Sherira, who shortens the period of the Saburaim and begins the Gaonic period earlier.

The Gaonic period, which, according to him, consists of eight generations of heads of academies, is described fully, even the biography of each Gaon, especially of the important ones, is given, at times at length. At all events, no important episode in Jewish life is left out.

The last part is devoted to the intellectual life in Spain. Ibn Daud is the only authority for the story of the four captives (Ch. X, Sect. 133) who founded spiritual centers in Spain, North Africa and Egypt. Here in describing the first three generations of, what he calls, the Rabbinic period, he waxes eloquent and eulogizes his favorite heroes, Samuel the Prince, Isaac Al-Fasi and his pupil Joseph Ibn Migash. After vindicating his purpose and giving the uninterrupted chain of tradition from the last prophets, Hagai Zachariah and Malachai to Joseph Ibn Migash,—said chain consisting of thirty-six generations of traducers,—he turns his attention to the Karaites. He delivers a virulent attack against them, charges that they never composed any important book on any subject, and did not contribute to science and poetry. Here, he has a chance to make up some deficiency in his book, for thus far he has spoken only of the traducers of law and has not mentioned the great men in other fields. Now he gives a list of Jewish grammarians, exegetes, poets, philosophers, mentioning all the luminaries of the golden age, in order to show the spiritual wealth of the Rabbanites as against the poverty of the Karaites. Of the Karaites he mentions only Anan, Jacob Al-Kirkisani and Joshua Al-Faraj, against whom he is virulent.

It is also worth noting that he hardly mentions the great scholars of France and Germany; Jacob Tam the great Tosafist is the exception. However, in an addition to the book, found in some manuscripts, he gives a short sketch of the rise of learning in Provence, tells of Rabbi Mochir who was brought by Charlemagne from Babylon to Narbonne and subsequent scholars. He also mentions Rabbi Gershon, Rabbi Jacob Tam and Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam).

Ibn Daud, who was a great lover of sciences, does not neglect to give data about the composition of great books in all sciences, even though they have little to do with his subject. Thus, he records while writing on the disciples of Akiba, that in their days there lived Ptolemy the astronomer and the *Almagest,* great book on astronomy, was then written by him. When writing on Judah the Prince he remarks that Galen's medical treatises were then written, while Hippocrates' books were written much earlier.

The influence of this book was very great. For generations it was considered an authentic source book on Jewish history. Almost all subsequent historians throughout the ages, up to modern times, have made it their principal source and even modern historians used it to a great extent, though with a more critical attitude.

The History of the Jewish Kings during the Second Commonwealth, deals with the political history of the Jews of that period. It is, as stated, a supplement to his main work. The book begins with the death of Alexander, tells of the translation of the Septuagint and goes over to the story of persecution under Antiochus. He relates of the struggle of the Maccabees, but only the character of Judah is delineated extensively, the reign of the other brothers is passed over briefly. John Hyrcanus and Alexander Janaus are treated at greater length, especially the war of the former with the Samarians and the break of the latter with the Pharisees. Likewise, all the wars of the brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobolus, and the reign of Herod are given in detail and a special description of the beauty of the Temple built by the latter is included. Before the author goes over to the siege of Jerusalem, he describes the various parties of the Jews and then the story of the last revolt is told. The book closes with a quotation from a Midrash bearing the name, *Ten Exiles,* where the various exiles of the Jews are enumerated, and is wound up by a symbolic interpretation of Zecharia Ch. XI, showing that all the events told in the book were foreshadowed in that prophecy.

The history of Rome is a short tractate telling briefly, and in a rather dry manner, the succession of the Roman rulers up to the time of Mohammed. He begins with the foundation of the city, gives a list of the Roman kings up to the foundation of the Republic and then goes over to Cæsar and follows up with a list of emperors up to Honorius. Then he tells of the invasion of Spain by the Visigoths and their subsequent affairs. After this he resumes the enumeration of the Roman emperors up to the time of Mohammed.

We can not ascertain exactly the sources used by Ibn Daud. We can only surmise that for the Book of Tradition he used the letter of Sherira, records of Nathan the Babylonian, and besides these also some chronicles of the academy at Sura and other sources. For the history of the Second Commonwealth he used mostly Jossipon. In fact, according to later testimony, he is supposed to have compiled an abstract of Jossipon and probably this book is referred to, though there are certain differences between the work of Ibn Daud and *Josippon*. For the Roman history, he must have used the chronicle of Isidore of Seville, composed in 615 which concludes with the seventh century. The style of Ibn Daud is only second to *Josippon*. It is a pure Hebrew, concise and flowing. At times, it reaches even poetic beauty and it is on the whole Biblical.

B. Geography

194. EARLY GEOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

Jewish Geographical literature in the classical period consists mostly of tales of travel. Of geography proper there are only a few books and these deal with a few data connected with astronomy and belong properly to mathematical geography, which will be discussed in the chapter on science. These tales of travel, however, contain many important descriptions of the countries visited, as well as the customs and manners of the people inhabiting them. They are thus contributions to geographic knowledge. That they also contain many historical data goes without saying, and their proper name would then be historical geographic narratives.

i. The earliest of such books is *The Tales of Eldad the Danite*. These stories, were, as it seems, not written by Eldad himself but by others who heard him tell the stories. Eldad appeared in Kairwan, North Africa, about the year 890 and told the Jews strange stories about the lost tribes. He himself claimed to belong to the tribe of Dan and described in glowing colors the mode of life of the tribes, their independence and their government. These stories, together with his peculiar use of Hebrew and somewhat different versions of legal tradition which he quoted, aroused not only the curiosity of the Jews of Kairwan but also their suspicion. They then dispatched an inquiry to the Gaon Tzemah ben

Haim at Sura. This inquiry contains the gist of his stories. The Gaon told them that he had also heard of this Eldad who visited Babylon some years previous and that on the whole, he believes his stories to be correct, namely, that the exiles of the ten tribes really do live in these parts of the world indicated by Eldad, in a free and independent manner under their own kings, and that the changes in legal tradition are mostly due to Eldad's travails sustained by him in his travels which caused him to make some mistakes in his statements.

Besides the text of the stories contained in this inquiry, there are a number of other versions which differ somewhat from one another, but agree in the main parts. The gist of all the stories is as follows. Eldad, who hailed as it seems, either from Arabia or East Africa, where in those times there were some independent Jewish tribes, left his country on a trading journey in a boat. On the way, he was shipwrecked, but he and another Jew from the tribe of Asher escaped being drowned by clinging to a board of the ship. They were seized by a Negro cannibal tribe who devoured his companion, but Eldad managed to avoid that fate. This tribe was meanwhile attacked by another tribe, coming from a distance, who took him with them to their country. There he was ransomed by a Jew from the tribe of Issachar who brought him to his country. Then he began his travels.

As for the location of the ten tribes, Eldad distributes them over the whole known globe. Four tribes, namely, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher, live in Eastern Africa, Issachar, Zebulun and Reuben on the mountains near Persia, Ephraim and half the tribe of Menasseh in Arabia, and Simeon and the other half of Menasseh in Khazaria. Since he himself comes from Dan he is very loquacious about that tribe, tells us that the tribe left Palestine earlier than the exile by the Assyrians (722 B.C.E.), namely, at the time of the division of the kingdom under Jeroboam, as they did not want to fight against Judah. They passed through Egypt on their way to Eastern Africa, where later, the other three tribes joined them. They are under the leadership of a king of a tribe of Dan and lead a warlike life, each tribe going out on a raid for three months during the year. Their land is very fruitful and abounds in precious metals, yet they lead a nomadic life and live in tents. Of the other tribes he only gives their habitat and a few details of their life. On the other hand, he tells at length of the children of Moses who live on the other side of the wonderful river, Sambation, a river mentioned in the Talmud and Agada as one which is very stormy the whole week and throws out stones but is quiet on the Sabbath. These children of Moses were carried thither by a cloud, at the time of the destruction of the temple, and the Sambation protects them. Eldad gives their location also in Africa, further than the place where the other tribes live. The land beyond the Sambation is a wonderful one. It contains no dangerous animals, and plants grow there twice a year. The people are very rich, live long, possess a Talmud in Hebrew, which traces legal tradition direct to Moses. Their communication with the other tribes is by means of carrier pigeons and thus he continues to relate of their exceptionally happy life.

The kernel of truth in all these mixtures of story and legend is, that Eldad himself most likely hailed from among the Jews who inhabited the shores of the Gulf of Aden and who lived a tribal independent life. When he began his travels he found it necessary to tell the dispersed Jews, whether with the purpose of encouraging them, or some other aim, the stories about the ten tribes. He collected all tales about independent Jewish kingdoms and wove them into one. He most likely heard about the conversion of the Khazars and mistook them to be Jews.

The style of his Hebrew is peculiar and contains many Arabisms and strange words which, for one reason or another, were in vogue in his native country where Hebrew in a more primitive form was spoken. His legal tradition is also that of his native Jews, who not being acquainted with the Talmud and later Rabbinic traditions, conducted themselves according to traditions they brought with them. These traditions agree in a number of things with those of the Talmud and the deviations are to be explained by ignorance.

Eldad's stories made a great impression upon the Jews of his time and even upon those of the succeeding generations. The Jews rejoiced hearing of the existence of Jewish kingdoms somewhere on the globe. In fact, many of his stories were known to them. The legends about Sambation and the children of Moses are found in Agadic literature, yet his words seemed to them a corroboration of these tales, as he imparted to them the strength of the testimony of an eye-witness.

ii. A more important historical geographical document is the letters exchanged between Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915–970), diplomat and nagid, i. e. prince of Spanish Jewry, and Joseph, King of the Khazars, a Tartar tribe, who embraced Judaism.

Hasdai having heard, through the various ambassadors from the kings of Germany and the Slavs that used to come to the court of his master, Abd al Rahman, of the existence of a Jewish kingdom in Khazaria, was anxious to communicate with the king. His interest was especially aroused since he was misled by the tales of Eldad, who placed some of the ten tribes in that country, to believe that the Khazars are really a part of these Jewish tribes. After several unsuccessful attempts, he finally managed to send a letter to that king which was received by him.

In that letter, Hasdai gives the king a number of geographical data about the kingdom of Andalusia, its distance from the equator, from the sea, its boundaries, extent of the land and natural resources. He also describes the exact position of the capital, Cordova, its exact distance from the sea and its area. While he determines the distance of Andalusia from the equator, he makes general remarks about the degrees and the equator, and also determines the distance of Constantinople from the equator as well as that of Khazaria. It is interesting to note that Hasdai is very close in his calculations of geographical locations of the countries he mentions to those we know them to be today.

He then asks the king a series of questions regarding the extent of his kingdom, its nature and character, the form of his government, the routes of commerce, his relations with the kingdoms of Armenia, Persia and the Byzantine colonies on the Black Sea. Also, believing him to be a Jewish king ruling over part of the ten tribes, Hasdai asks him to tell him of their traditions and whether they possess more definite information about the coming of the Messiah.

The letter is written in a pure, flowing Hebrew style, and as it seems, its writer was the famous grammarian and exegete, Menahem ben Saruk (Ch. VII, Sect. 95).

To this letter the Khazar king, Joseph, answered in a lengthy epistle. After expressing his joy over Hasdai's letter, he disillusions him and tells of the Tartaric descent of the tribe, of course relating it, in the manner of the times to *Tugarma,* one of the grandchildren of Japheth, mentioned in the Table of Nations, Genesis Ch. X. He then tells him of the story of conversion, referred to above (Ch. XI, Sect. 167), and finally gives him the geographic data desired. From these we learn that the Khazars' kingdom occupied the area between the Volga, Caspian Sea (Gargan, in the Hebrew of the letter, which is the name Jarjan used by Arabic geographers, the Gimel pronounced as J), and the river Don. At times, though, the boundaries extended to the Dnieper (Uzg, in the letter which is the Tartaric name Eski for that river). He also tells him of the three capitals, Semender towards Caucasia, Sarkal on the Don, and Itil on the Volga—Itil being also the name of the river in Tataric. There are several versions of that letter, and a fragment of one, published by the late Dr. Schechter from the collection of manuscripts in Cairo, gives a more rational version of the conversion of the Khazar king or Kagan, omitting the appearance of the angel to the Kagan Bulan (see above Ch. XI, Sect. 167), but ascribing it to the influence of the constantly increasing number of Jewish settlers. The gist of the matter is, that though these letters have undoubtedly received in the course of time some embellishments, they contain historical truth about the conversion of the Khazars. The geographical data are corroborated by contemporary Arabic geographers. The letter is likewise written in a fine flowing Hebrew, employing here and there some expressions modeled after the Arabic.

195. THE TRAVELS OF BENJAMIN OF TUDELA

An exceptionally important historical geographical document is the record of the travels of Benjamin of Tudela. The book possesses great value for Jewish history, for general history, for geographical knowledge and especially for the history and geography of commerce. We know little about the life of the author except his name and birthplace, the city of Tudela in Navarre, Spain, and the date of his travels. Though he is often called Rabbi Benjamin, it is very doubtful that he was a professional scholar. On the contrary, from the tone of the description and from the very accurate information he gives regarding trade and commerce, it can be concluded that he was a merchant.

It is difficult to ascertain the purpose of his travels, but it may be surmised, that he was actuated by two motives, to visit the holy places of the Jews, and by a desire to get acquainted with the totality of Jewish life all over the world. Possessing a keen observing eye and a practical sense of conditions of life, he left us a record stocked with information about the state of the world Jewry in the second half of the twelfth century in all its phases, spiritual and economic. But he does not limit himself to the Jews alone, he gives also the geographical data of the places he visited, quotes facts regarding general life of the peoples, their governments, trade, wars and religious beliefs. Hence, the itinerary of Benjamin is of interest to the general historian and geographer as well.

The period of his travels extends for about thirteen or fourteen years between the years 1159 or so, to 1173. The lands and places described by him practically cover the entire habitable part of the globe at that time. But we must admit that he did not visit all the countries he describes. A number of them, such as parts of Persia, India, Ceylon, Arabia in Asia, and France, Germany and the Slavic lands such as Poland and Russia, were not visited by him, but he collected data about them and records the reports he heard. In general, the itinerary of Benjamin is to be divided into two parts, what he saw and what he heard. In the first part his account is fuller and more detailed, and as a rule, he always names the leaders and elders of the Jewish communities and gives many more details about their life. In the second part, the description is general and brief.

Benjamin started his journeys from Saragossa in Aragon, proceeded along to Barcelona, from there he went to Provence, visiting almost all important cities such as Narbonne, Beziers and Lunel, until he reached Marseilles. From Marseilles, he went by boat to Genoa, then to Pisa, Lucca and Rome. In all these visits, he describes not only the number of Jews living in each place, giving the names of the leading scholars and heads of the communities, but also the centers of trade and mode of government. Thus he tells us of the republics of Genoa and Pisa, the constant warfare between them and the exact distance of Pisa from the sea and other things. To the description of Rome, Benjamin devotes considerable space. He has an eye for beauty and describes the palaces, even telling us the names of their builders, with some legendary embellishments of course. That he gives a clear account of the Jewish community of Rome is self-evident. From there he proceeded to travel to Brindisi, through the cities of Southern Italy, and noted everything on the way, not neglecting to tell us of the great Medical University at Salerno, of the petroleum wells near Sorrento, and of Trani, the port of embarkation for the Crusaders.

From Brindisi he went to Otranto and embarked for Corfu and thence through European Byzantium to Constantinople, visiting all important cities, marking their natural resources and the trade and the nature of the people inhabiting them. Benjamin gives an accurate description of the Wallachians, their mode of life, and their constant raids upon Greek settlements. This description is corroborated by contemporary Byzantine writers. Constantinople is described at length, the palaces, churches, especially the one of St. Sophia, the Hippodrome, the revenues of the government, the leading officers of the empire and the geographic location of the city on the Sea of Marmora and the bay of Bosphorus are all portrayed. Benjamin's description of Constantinople evoked the approval of a historian like Gibbon who quotes him on this point.

From Constantinople Benjamin went, by way of Rodosto, to Gallipoli and thence through the Ægean Archipelago, visiting the Islands of Mytilene, Chios, Samos, Cyprus, to the coast of Asia Minor, disembarking at the port of Corycus. Thence he proceeded along the Syrian coast to Acre, or Acca, in Palestine. Benjamin noted all things worth while noting. Thus he tells us of the cultivation of the Mastic tree, which exudes a kind of resin formerly used in medicine, describes the waterworks of Antioch, gives the name of the Christian Prince, Bonemund Poetivin, and even his nickname, Le Baube (the baby), which he received on account of his imperfect speech. He also describes, being the first European to do so, the Mohammedan sect of Assassins, a sect of the Shiites, supporters of the claims of the descendants of Ali, son-in-law of Mohammed to the Caliphate. This sect, which during the twelfth century spread throughout Western Asia, was a great political factor in those days and its members were notorious for their implicit obedience to their chief and also for practicing all means, especially murder, in order to gain their aim. The name assassin, though, does not mean murderers, but is derived from a plant, Hashishim, which they used as an opiate in their services. Benjamin's description of them is very accurate, though brief. Equally true is his description of the sect of the Druses.

To his description of Palestine, Benjamin devotes a number of chapters. He visited every important city and states the number of Jews, their occupations, leaders and scholars. He also gives the location of the graves of the great men in Israel and a few legends, as well as a description of the Samaritans. As Palestine was then in the hands of the Crusaders, Benjamin gives the Latin and French names of certain localities.

From Palestine, the traveler went back to Syria, visited Damascus, which he describes extensively, and then through Baalbek and Mesopotamia to Bagdad. This city, which was at the time not only the capital of the Caliphate, but the center of a large Jewish population, attracted, of course, the attention of Benjamin. He gives all details of the Mohammedan government, the conduct of the Caliph, and, of course, that of the Jewish community, the office of the exilarch, which was still existing in a lesser form, and finally, the nature of the city itself.

After Bagdad there follows a description of a large number of countries, such as Persia, Yemen, the Island of Kish in the Indian Ocean, the coast of Malabar and the Island of Ceylon. It is almost certain, though, that Benjamin did not visit all these countries and he only reports on what he heard about them. This is proved by the fact that with very few exceptions he does not mention any names of leaders of all the numerous Jewish communities he writes about. Nevertheless, though Benjamin, most likely, did not visit these countries, his report of them is comparatively a detailed one. As might be expected, this report, which is gathered from others, contains a good deal of exaggeration, yet it also contains a good deal of true information. There are a number of legends such as the one about the wonderful coffin of Daniel, which hangs suspended in midriver at Susa, or Shushan of the Bible.

In his description of Persia and Media, there are exaggerations about the number of Jews residing there as well as about their strength and military prowess. Influenced by unfounded reports and by the tales of Eldad, he speaks of the four tribes residing in the mountainous part of Persia. He describes them as free and independent, engaged in warfare and the allies of powerful Turkish tribes. While writing on Persia, he tells of the false Messiah that arose there in the twelfth century, David al Roy, which story became the subject of a novel by that name, written by Benjamin Disraeli. Benjamin is the only authority for that event.

In his report of the countries lying beyond Persia, he becomes more practical and accurate. He was the first European to report of the Island of Kish in the Indian Ocean, which was in his time a great emporium of exchange between the merchants of India, Persia and Arabia. Benjamin does not neglect to give an account of the products bartered and, of course, the number of Jews living there. He then describes the coast of Malabar, gives the customs of the natives, the climate, and mentions that pepper, ginger and cinnamon grow there. He tells us that the people are fire worshippers, which would mean that a large number of the ancient Parsis found refuge there after the conquest of the Mohammedans, and even describes their mode of burial which is, leaving the dead in the air until the flesh is dried and only the skeleton remains. He also knows of the black Jews of Malabar.

He then describes the Island of Ceylon and with his usual carefulness gives an account of the inhabitants of the country and their customs. He also tells of the remarkable sea between that island and China, where, at times, on account of great storms, all vessels are wrecked, and adds a strange tale regarding the way people save themselves from being drowned. They wrap themselves up in the skins of cattle and throw themselves into the ocean. A big bird, called the griffin, then comes and picks them up and carries them to land with the intention of devouring them, but there the men kill the bird with knives prepared before and thus escape. All that Benjamin tells about these distant places are more or less corroborated by later travelers and even the strange tales are repeated by Marco Polo, who visited India and China about two decades after Benjamin.

Benjamin seemed to have returned by way of the Indian Ocean from the vicinity of Bagdad or some port in Persia through Arabia to Egypt. However, his description of Yemen and Abyssinia is scanty and brief, and only a general statement about the free Jews dwelling in the mountains around Aden, which he confuses with Eden of the Bible (2 Kings, XIX, 12), a place in Assyria. He resumes his trend of detailed narrative of Egypt. Of this country he gives a full description, treating of its government, its agricultural products, the Nile, its course, division into arms, and cause of its rise. He pays, of course, special attention to the Jews living in Egypt, telling of their customs and divisions. To Alexandria, he devotes a whole chapter describing the beauty of its buildings, and especially the port and the wonderful lighthouse. As one who had a special eye for business, Benjamin gives a list of all the nations who come to trade at this great port. From Egypt our traveler went by boat to Messina, Sicily, and thence through Italy back to Spain where shortly after his return he must have died. This then constitutes the circle of his travels. But in order to give a complete picture of the Jews the world over, Benjamin adds a brief chapter on the Jews of Germany, France and the Slavic countries, mentioning the names of the important cities including that of Kiev in distant Russia.

The style of the book is the usual Rabbinic Hebrew, a very plain prosaic narrative, with no pretension to fine writing, in other words, the style of a learned merchant. The book as we possess it, must have been abridged by its editors whoever they were. From some indications, it is evident that Benjamin's account was longer. That the names of the countries and places were wrongly transcribed by the later copyists goes without saying. The best edition of the itinerary is that of A. Asher published with an English translation and copious notes in 1840.

Benjamin's account was held in great esteem by subsequent writers on history and geography, both Jewish and gentile. It was translated almost into all European languages beginning with Latin. The main sober facts in his story were corroborated by subsequent travelers. As for the exaggerated numbers and fables, they must be charged, as Zunz says, to the spirit of his time. That the itinerary was a favorite book with the Jews goes without saying and the many printed editions testify to it.

196. ITINERARY OF PETACHIA

Only a few years after Benjamin completed his circle of travels, another Jewish traveler took his wandering staff and made a similar circuit, of which we also have a record, though a more fragmentary one. This time it was a German Jew, Petachia of Regensburgh. He was the brother of one of the famous Tosafists, Rabbi Isaac Halaban (i. e. the White one) of Prague. Two recorded events determine the period of his travels. While describing Damascus he mentions the fact that the King of Egypt rules over this city. This could not be before November, 1174, when Saladin, the ruler of Egypt, conquered Damascus. On the other hand, he visited Jerusalem when the Christians still held it, and this must have been before 1187, for in that year it was conquered by Saladin. Consequently, his travels must have been between 1175–1185.

The purpose of his travels is unknown. He was, probably, motivated by a desire similar to the one of Benjamin, namely, to visit the holy places and observe Jewish life. He lacked, however, Benjamin's keen eye and practical sense, and his information is rather scanty. With few exceptions, he limits himself to Jewish life. Besides, he did not write the record himself, but gave his notes to his friend, Rabbi Judah, the pious, at Regensburgh, who again turned it over to a writer to compose the itinerary. It thus came out fragmentary, for the editor omitted many things, especially geographic data. The records speak of Petachia in the third person. As a result this itinerary is of much less value than that of Benjamin. Yet it has some value, for this traveler covered some countries which Benjamin did not visit; besides, his notes of the countries visited by both serve as a check up on Benjamin's information, and thus they complete each other.

Petachia took a different route from that of Benjamin. Starting from Prague in Bohemia, he proceeded East to Poland, from there to Kiev in Russia, and crossed the Dnieper into Crimea. While he gives few details, or they might have been omitted, about the geographical position of the country, he tells us of the peculiar mode employed by the inhabitants in crossing the river, namely, placing the wagons on skins tied to horses which swim in the waters. He also makes some remarks about the life of the Tartars. More important is his information about the large number of Karaites who lived, at the time, in Crimea. According to him there were hardly any Rabbanites there.

From Crimea he proceeded through little Tartary, parts of Caucasia and Armenia, until he arrived at Nisibis and ultimately at Mosul. From here his notes become fuller. He gives more details about the Jewish communities in Babylon, also mentioning the names of the leaders and scholars. To Bagdad he devotes considerable space, but primarily to the state of Jewry. He mentions the head of the Academy to be Rabbi Samuel ben Ali, the very same mentioned by Benjamin and who is otherwise known to us as an opponent of Maimonides. The exilarch, Daniel, spoken of by Benjamin, Petachia states to have died a year before he arrived. All these data are important for Jewish history.

From Bagdad he went to Susa, but very little is given us about the cities he visited. He devotes his notes to exaggerated and fabulous tales of the graves of Ezekiel, Ezra and Daniel, repeating the same stories about them as Benjamin and many more. It seemed that he had compiled a list of the locations of the graves of the Amoraim but forgot it in Bohemia. On the whole, he was more credulous and less observant than Benjamin.

From Susa, he came back to Bagdad and turned West, passed Nesibis again and then through to Alepa to Damascus. He gives us a few important data about Damascus, including the one mentioned that it belongs to the Sultan of Egypt, the number of Jews there, and the name of the head of the Academy, which was Ezra. From Damascus, he came to Tiberias and passed through Galilee to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem he found only one Jew instead of the two hundred mentioned by Benjamin. It seems that the constant wars between the Christians and Mohammedans, centering around the city, reduced the number of inhabitants. He also visited Hebron and the vicinity of the Dead Sea. The notes of Petachia on Palestine are very meager and are mainly limited to descriptions of sepulchers, such as the cave of Machpelah and the grave of Rachel, in Hebron and Bethlehem, those of Joshua, the prophet Obadiah and Hillel and Shamai in Galilee and many others. He hardly mentions names of leaders and scholars in Palestine with the exception of one man at Tiberias, Rabbi Nehorbi, who was both a physician and spice vender. His distinction was that he claimed to be a descendant of

Judah the Prince, the compiler of the Mishnah and thus of Davidic descent.

With Palestine, the itinerary of Petachia ends. There are only a few lines devoted to Greece, saying that there are many Jews there, and that a number of young men among them are practicing necromancy. He must have then returned to his home city, Prague, through Greece and the Balkans, but no record is found. It is possible that much of his itinerary was lost. On the whole, his record pales in comparison with that of Benjamin's, yet it is not entirely his fault. Partly it is the fault of the editor who says distinctly that the names of the cities and the distances between them given by Petachia were omitted by him as of no significance.

The itinerary of Petachia was printed several times and was translated into Latin by Wagenseil and later into English, German and French.

Chapter XV

SCIENCE

197. GENERAL FEATURES

The contact with the Arabic culture which acted as a great stimulus to Jewish literature and opened up new vistas of literary activity, such as poetry, philosophy, philology and all other manifestations that we have been chronicling heretofore, has likewise aroused the interest of Jewish savants in science. True scientific knowledge was not entirely strange to the scholars of the Talmudic period. There are many fragments of science scattered in the vast Talmudic literature. There are numerous passages there touching on mathematical, astronomical and medical matters. These prove conclusively that a great number of scholars were well acquainted at least with the principles of these sciences. But this knowledge was only used as a byproduct, as means to illustrate certain points in legal discussion, as was the case with mathematics and astronomy, or in case of medicine, more in matters of Agada in order to inculcate a moral or teach the conduct of life.

Throughout the whole Talmudic and Agadic literature composed of so many books and treatises, we do not find even one treatise devoted especially to a systematic exposition of the principles of one of these sciences. There may be, however, some exception in regard to astronomy. This science which plays an important role in the fixation of the calendar which determines and regulates observation of the festivals, was especially cultivated by the doctors of the law. It is quite possible that some treatises on this science were composed early, but they were not preserved. It is true that several astronomical treatises which we do possess bear the name of Baraitha (i. e. an Apocryphal Mishnah) and one of them is ascribed to Samuel of the first generation of Amoraim (see Ch. V, Sect. 75). But careful analysis shows that it is of later date (see below). There are also several astronomical chapters included in the late Midrash, Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer (Pirke Di Rabbi Eliezer) (Ch. VI, Sect. 86). This Midrash, however, is a product of the Gaonic period. Yet it is possible that it includes material from earlier treatises of Talmudic times, for we find distinct reference to a treatise on calendar calculation in the Talmud which is called, *Sod Haibur* (Secret of Intercalation). The fact that such matters were not discussed openly in the schools but were considered a secret teaching, relegated only to scholars, may account for the non-preservation of the treatises.

With the entry of the Arabic period when the Jews participated freely in the culture of the age, there begins the production of a real scientific literature. There arose Jewish scholars who were interested in the sciences as such. The role that the Jews played in transmitting scientific knowledge from the East to the West was very great, and is well known. The list of Jewish scientists from the eighth century, the beginning of the bloom of culture in the East down through the Middle Ages, is very long. But a detailed exposition of this role belongs more to a history of sciences. Here we are concerned only with the literary productions of importance in Hebrew, and accordingly we will survey them briefly.

Astronomy

198. CALENDAR CALCULATIONS

As we have seen, the science of astronomy was cultivated by the Jews as an important element in calendar fixation. We have, therefore, a considerable number of treatises bearing on that subject, which begin to make their appearance in the eighth century. To that period belong the three astronomical chapters in the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer,* where the questions of the length of the solar and lunar years and that of the solar and lunar time cycles are discussed.

A more important astronomical work is the one called, *The Baraitha of Samuel,* which was composed according to the statement of its author, in the year 776. This deals only slightly with calendar fixation but primarily with the position and the movements of the planets and the luminaries. It describes the position of the constellations, the distance between them and the time of the solar and lunar eclipses. He gives also rules for calculating the solar solstices and other matters. As astronomy in those days was inherently connected with astrology, the author adds a chapter on the special influence of the stars on human destiny.

The style of the book is very difficult. It lacks clearness and is very cryptic. It is made more difficult by the fact that the author was desirous to give the treatise a Midrashic form and intertwines many verses of the Bible as proof that certain astronomical data were already referred to there.

Other calendar treatises are: *The Cycle of Nachshan,* ascribed to Rabbi Nachshan Gaon (877–885), where the nineteen-year cycle is discussed;[1] Saadia's writings on the calendar which were written with a controversial purpose against the Karaites, who denied the validity of the calendar system, and also against a Palestinian Gaon, Ben Meir, who wanted to introduce some changes in it. Of these writings, the more important are *The Secret of Intercalation* (Sod ha-Ibur) and *The Book of the Holidays* (Sepher ha-Moadim). These, most likely, were written in Hebrew, but of the first nothing was preserved, except that it is frequently referred to by later writers, and of the second, a few fragments came to light from the Genizah in recent years.

The same work was taken up by scholars in other countries. Hanan, the judge at Cordova (970), wrote extensive works on the subject, which were, however, lost, but are quoted by later authors and also Isaac Israeli, the philosopher and physician in North Africa. A very important work on the subject was written by the astronomer, Abraham bar Hyiya (see Ch. XI, Sect. 166), under the name *Sod ha-Ibur* (Secret of the Intercalation). This was a complete treatise on the subject, in Hebrew, and served as an authority to later writers. In it rules and regulations for calculation of various festival dates and calendar making are given. A book under a similar name was also written by Abraham Ibn Ezra. It is called *The Book of Intercalation* (Sepher ha-Ibur). It was recently discovered and published by S. Halcerstamm.

Maimonides also has written extensively on the subject, both in his code, where he devotes a special section to it, and in a special book, a treatise on intercalation. In the code, besides dealing with the calendar proper, he devotes also a few chapters to astronomy in general, giving a description of the spheres and their movement in their orbits and especially of the various movements of the sun and the moon.

Even the French and German scholars who were not well versed in astronomy, yet wrote treatises on the calendar. Thus we have chapters on the calendar by Simcha of Vitry, disciple of Rashi in his code, Mahser Vitry (see above Ch. X) and a book by Jacob ben Samson (1123) on the subject.

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[1] The nineteen-year cycle is the cycle where there are seven intercalated years, i. e. seven years having thirteen months and twelve plain lunar years. The seven months thus added make up the difference between the lunar year of 354 days and the solar 365¼. In this way the Jews are able to equalize their lunar calendar with the solar, and maintain the fixity of the festivals, preventing their circling throughout the year, as is the case with the Mohammedan festivals.

199. GENERAL ASTRONOMY

With the bloom of the Arabic culture in the East and the rise of the science of astronomy, Jews began to participate in the development of these sciences. They were active both as translators from the Greek and as writers of books on the subject. One of the earliest of Jewish astronomers was one by the name of Maschalls (754–813), who hailed from Egypt, but resided at the court of the Caliph, Al-Mansur. He wrote a number of treatises on astronomy and astrology. The most important are, a Treatise on the Astrolabe,[2] on rain and wind and on the conjunction of the stars. The first two are of astronomical importance, the last belongs to astrology. The two last ones were also translated into Hebrew under the names of *ha-Geshem* (rain) and *Sepher ha-Chiburim* (i.e. conjunctions). He was primarily known, though, as an astrologer and his works in this field are numerous.

Sahae, called Raban Al-Batir, was another scientist of that century (800). He seemed to have translated the Almagest of the celebrated Ptolemy of Alexandria, the bible of astronomers during the ages, into Arabic. He also wrote numerous works on astrology. An astronomical work was also written by the physician, Isaac Israeli.

The Spanish school of scholars has made important contributions in science as well as in other literary fields. The Hebrew scientific literature really begins with them. Abraham ben Hiya, mentioned above, was the first one to write a complete textbook on astronomy in Hebrew. It is called *Zurath ha-Aretz* (i.e. The form of the earth). But the full name is much longer and it tells us that it treats of all the heavenly bodies and the course of the stars. In the introduction he divides astronomy, which he calls the science of vision (Hokmat ha-Hisoion), namely, the observation of the heavens, into two parts, a) the description of the forms of the heavenly bodies, i.e. astrography, b) the theoretical part, by means of which we calculate the position of the stars at any time. The book is devoted to the first part, the other part he promises to deal with elsewhere. He, most likely, refers to the book on the calendar, referred to above. He also speaks of astrology, which he calls the practical science (Hokmat ha-Hisoion) but he does not value it as highly as astronomy. Still he promises to treat it in a separate book.

The book is divided into ten portals, or sections which are subdivided into chapters. The first one deals with the general description of the heavens and especially with the earth. He devotes a few chapters to prove the sphericity of the world in general, and the earth in particular. He then discusses its position in the center of the world, the division of the heavens into 360 degrees, the celestial plane, the equator and the division of the earth into seven climes or the weather zones, and other things. The second portal is devoted to the description of the planets and their forms and the course of the sun. The third describes the moon, its course and orbit, the fourth the eclipses and their causes. The fifth and sixth portals deal with the various courses of the planets, except the sun and moon, the seventh discusses the position of the stars in reference to the sphere of constellations, the eighth deals with the effect of the light of the sun upon the visibility of the stars. The ninth discusses the area of the earth and its measurement, and the tenth gives the various opinions regarding the fixed stars.

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[2] The astrolabe is an instrument used for more than fifteen centuries by astronomers and mariners to determine the altitude of the stars, sun and moon. The modern instruments are only improved astrolabes and are operated on the same principle.

Abraham Ibn Ezra wrote several books on astronomy and astrology. To the first belongs his book on the astrolabe, by the name of *Kli ha-Nehosheth* (a copper instrument), and his translation of the commentary of the Arabic astronomer, Al-Matani to the tables of Chuarsmi, into Hebrew. To the second belong *The Book of Nativity* (Sepher ha-Molodoth) and *The Book of Destiny* (Sepher ha-Goroloth) where rules are given how to forecast the events that will happen to men, by the coursing of the stars.

Books on astronomy and astrology were also written by the physician, Sabbatai Donolo of Aures, Italy (913–970). He describes himself as an assiduous student of these sciences. But his special books on these subjects were lost and only a considerable number of his astronomical and astrological observations are incorporated in his commentary to The Book of Creation (Ch. XII, Sect. 180).

200. *MATHEMATICS*

Mathematics was of great interest even to scholars in Talmudic times. Certain measurements and calculations affect the discussion of certain laws. We find, therefore, in the Talmud a number of mathematical discussions and rules for measurements which show, that both the Tannaim and Amoraim possessed considerable mathematical knowledge. But we have no books on that subject left to us from these times. There is, though, mention of a treatise by the name *Braitha di Mem Teth Midoth* (treatise of the forty-nine measurements of rules) ascribed to Rabbi Nathan, a Tanna of the last generation. But as the book is lost and the title is not certain whether it refers to measurements or rules in general, as the word Midoth may mean both, we can not conclude anything about its character.

In the Arabic and Gaonic period Jews became greatly interested in this science, for astronomy and mathematics are so intimately connected. Ibn Ezra claims that a Jew was instrumental in introducing the Indian decimal numeral system to the Arabic world. It is from that period that the first mathematical books hail.

The earliest treatise on that subject is an anonymous one by the name of *Mishnath ha-Midoth* (The Mishnah of Measurements). It is undoubtedly from Gaonic times, as it is written in Mishnaic form. The language, though, is pure Hebrew. It contains five chapters. The first gives the definitions of a square, a triangle, a circle, a semicircle and an arc. The second states the rules for computing the areas of squares, triangles, cylinders, parallepoids and pyramids, the third is devoted to the properties of polygons, the fourth to triangles and the fifth states rules for calculating the area of circles. Of great interest is the terminology used in the book, which differs somewhat from the one adopted later by Hebrew mathematicians.

Other works on these subjects were written by Abraham ben Hiya and Abraham Ibn Ezra. The first wrote a geometry in Hebrew called *A Treatise on Areas and Measurement* (Hibur ha-Meshiha V'ha-Tishboreth). The book was considered of great importance in its day and Plato of Tivoli, a celebrated mathematician of the twelfth century, translated it into Latin. Ibn Ezra wrote several books on mathematics. These are, *Sepher ha-Mispor* (i. e. The Book of Numbers), an Arithmetic, The One (ha-Echod), on the Properties of the first ten numbers and a Treatise on the Science of Measurements (Hibur hakmat ha-Tishboreth), a geometry.

201. MEDICINE AND PHYSICS

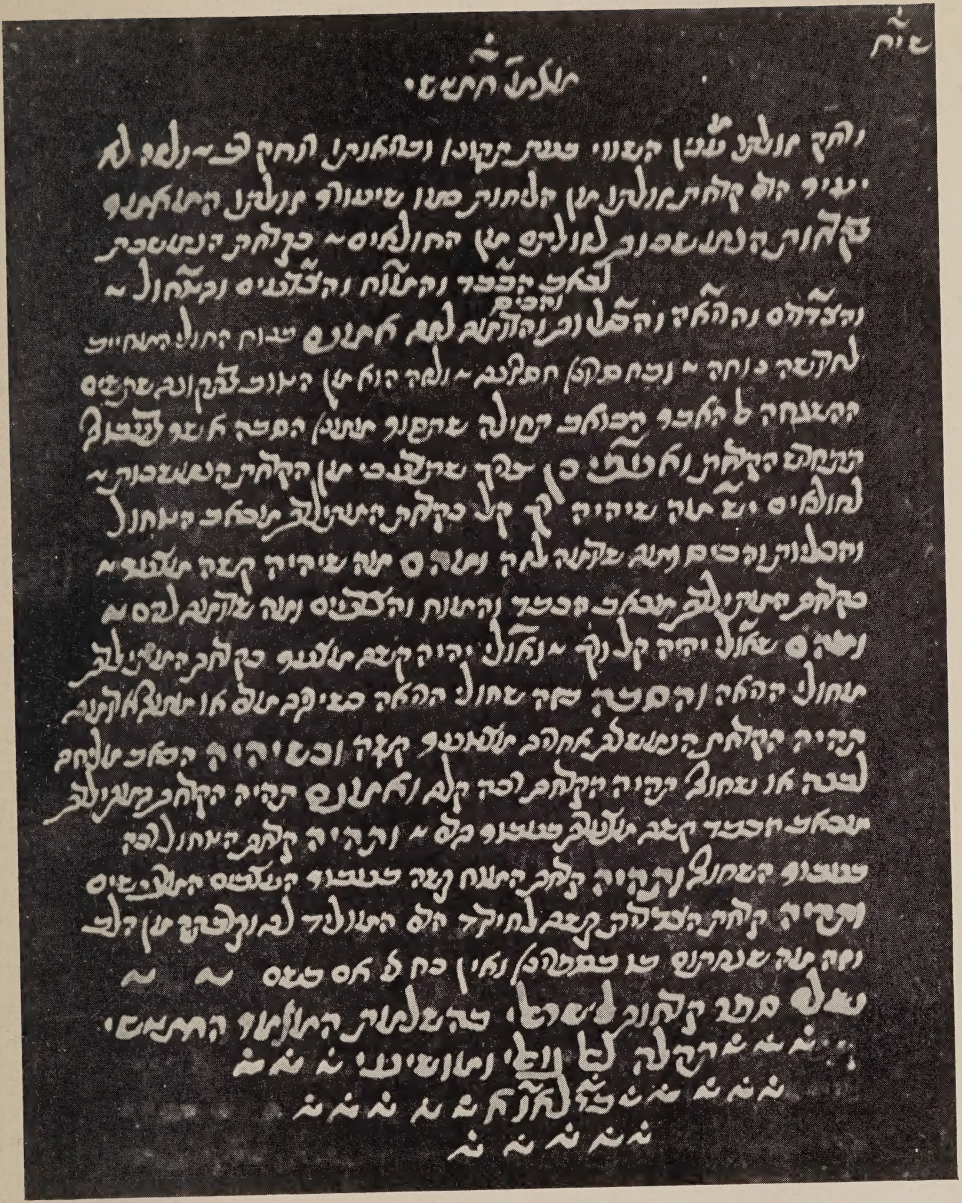
The close association of the Jews with the science and profession of medicine, during the Mediæval Ages, is well known. The list of Jewish physicians during that period will run into the hundreds. But as their contributions to that science, in this period, were mostly written in Arabic and the period of translations into Hebrew had not yet begun (for it primarily begins with the thirteenth century), they were mixed up with the Arabic medical writings and it is difficult to disentangle them from the mass of literature. Only a few of the writings on medicine, during the period ending with the twelfth century, were translated into Hebrew and thus escaped oblivion. The great mass of translated medical works belong, as said, to the following period.

Of the Jewish contributions to medicine in this period, the works of the following writers are worth noting. In the tenth century, the otherwise celebrated Chasdai Ibn Shaprut (915–970), in Spain, helped to translate the medical book of Discorides from the Greek into the Arabic. He also perfected a certain medicine, well known in the Middle Ages under the name of *Teriak*. At the same time, Sabbatai Donolo in Italy, who preferred to write in Hebrew, wrote in that language an original book on medicine by the name of the *Precious Treatise* (Sepher ha-Yakar). It dealt, as its sub title indicates, with the concoction of medicines, salves, making of bandages and other things. Fragments of the book were only recently discovered and were published by Steinschneider, in the Journal for Scientific Anatomy, in Germany. Donolo, on the whole, can be given the credit of being the first medical writer in Hebrew.

Isaac Israeli of Kairwan, North Africa was a famous physician of his time. He wrote a number of books on medicine, all in Arabic. But they were considered important enough to be translated into Latin by Constantinus Afer, of the University of Salerno. His books were used as textbooks at that university and the author known as Ysacus. Three of his works were several times translated into Hebrew, both directly from the Arabic and from the Latin of Constantinus. They are (*1*) On *Dietetics* (Heb. B‘teba ha-Mesonoth, i. e. on nature of foods). There are also two more translations of the same book, evidently from the Latin, under the titles, *Sepher ha-Misodim* and *Sepher ha-Maholim*. (2) On the *Urine and its Colors*. The Hebrew title is *Maroth ha-Sheten,* i. e. Colors of Urine. (*3*) *The Book of the Fever,* the most celebrated of his works. The Hebrew name is *Sepher B‘kadahath*.

To this century belongs also a medical book in Hebrew, which was called, *Sepher Rephuoth,* Book of Medicine, ascribed to one Asaph. It is a compilation of medical matters from many books and contains also other matters. It is entirely doubtful whether such a man existed, and the book is most likely a translation from the Arabic.

The eleventh century offers us little of medical literature in Hebrew and there are even few translations. All the great physicians that arose during this century wrote in Arabic, and little is known of them. There



A page from the Hebrew translation of Isaac Israeli's work, "Book of the Fever."
(MS. in the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.)

is, however, a reference by the great Rashi (Ch. X, Sect. 111) to a *Sepher Rephuoth,* a Book of Medicine, current in his time, but nothing is known of it.

Maimonides, who was also a celebrated physician, wrote a number of books in Arabic on medical subjects. Most of them were translated into Hebrew. The most important of these are (*1*) A Treatise on the Cure of Hemorrhoids, Heb. Maamar *B'rephuath ha-Tchorim;* (2) On Poisons, which he wrote at the request of the Visir Alfasi. It was translated into Hebrew by Moses Ibn Tibbon, under the name of, *Mamamar ha-Nichbod B'samim,* i.e. The Worthy Treatise on Poisons. (*3*) On Hygiene, one of the most important of his works, translated by the same Moses under the name of *Hanhogath ha-Briuth,* i.e. Regimen of Health; (*4*) Medical Aphorism, in Hebrew, *Pirke Moshe,* Chapters of Moses. They are culled from Galen's writings, but he added many of his own. The book was considered very valuable and was translated into Latin.

Another medical writer in this century, Shesheth the Prince, wrote a treatise in Hebrew on the Laxative Medicines (*Sepher Rephwoth Menakoth,* i.e. Purifying Medicines).

Chapter XVI

PROSE LITERATURE

202. *TALES AND FABLES*

In the development of literature, the prose phase as a rule makes its appearance comparatively late. The earlier stages are devoted to poetry and instruction. It is only after the craving for knowledge and expression of the deep soul-stirring emotions have been satisfied, that some attention is paid to the lighter phases of life, and a literature is created, whose purpose is not so much to teach as to entertain and amuse. Jewish literature, especially, being the product of an exceptionally serious-minded people, which was constantly engaged in a bitter struggle for existence, did not encourage this particular kind of literary production. True, the Agada in its wide range, contains many stories, fables and parables, but these came there, as a rule, by way of illustration of certain teachings. On the whole, we possess no books of this kind from that period. Even the great classic period, the progress of which we have been delineating in these pages, can not boast of many books of this kind, only one or two.

It is only towards the end of that period that such books begin to appear in larger numbers and keep on increasing during the succeeding centuries.

The nature and character of this literature is similar to the prose literature of Mediæval Europe in general. On the whole, it is Oriental in character. As many phases of Jewish literature, these productions were greatly influenced by the Arabic models, or some are even direct translations from Arabic works. It is many-faced and multi-colored. It contains folk tales, collections of fables, proverbs and apothegms, for it is not emancipated as yet from the desire to teach, and while it aims to entertain, it simultaneously wants to instruct. As the Oriental literature of that kind, its tales are grotesque and fanciful and the fables are animal fables, the proverbs pithy and always contain a moral. The style of most of the books is not only florid but actually semi-poetic. The Arabs were great lovers of the rhyme and they even used it in prose.

This is the well-known rhymed prose of Arabic literature. It has been imitated by the Jewish writers and rhymed prose became an elegant mode of expression. In this form of style, lengthy letters and treatises on various subjects were written. However, the extensive use of that style, as well as the literature itself reached its height in the post-classic period. In the one we are dealing with, the number of rhymed prose books is not large. Only a few can be named. To these as well as to the few other prose books we will devote our survey.

The earliest book of this kind written, in this period, with the purpose to entertain and instruct the people, is The Book of Stories (Sepher ha-Masioth) by Rabbi Nisim of Kairwan (see Ch. X, Sect. 134). The book was widely read in the Mediæval Ages, and some of the tales time when the latter was mourning for his son, in order that he might be occupied by the reading of pious and moral stories and thus assuage his pain.

It contains a large number of stories, mostly drawn from Jewish sources, from the Agada of the two Talmuds and Midrashim, and also from such collections which we do not possess any more. It contains, however, a number of stories taken from Arabic sources, but Nisim as a rule tinged them with Jewish color, changing in several instances the names of Arabic kings, who figured as the heroes of the stories to that of Solomon. In general, Nisim was not a mere compiler, but reworked the stories in an artistic fashion. When we compare the versions of the stories found both in his collection and in the Agadic books we possess, his version is on the whole the more excellent of the two.

The book was written in Arabic but it was early translated into Hebrew and for a long time it was thought that it was the original language in which it was written. Only when the late Dr. Harkavey discovered the Arabic original of the Book of Stories, the question of the original language of the book was definitely determined. The story book was widely read in the Mediæval Ages, and some of the tales found there even served as themes for poets in their songs. Thus, one of the stories about the goodness of Elijah found in Nisim's story book, to which we find no parallels anywhere, is as follows: There was a very pious man, who devoted himself to the service of God with all his heart, to the neglect of all affairs of this life. His family suffered greatly from want until it could bear it no longer. His wife then insisted that he go to the market in search of some business, but he did not have the necessary clothing to go out among people. She borrowed the clothing and sent him out to the market while the entire family prayed for his success.

In the market the pious man met Elijah who told him to sell him (Elijah) as a slave to the first bidder. The man followed his advice and proclaimed the sale of an exceptionally wise and skillful slave. One man bought the slave for a large sum and offered him his freedom, on the condition that he complete for him certain palaces which were under construction. Elijah prayed to God and angels completed the building in the period of one night. He was, of course, freed and the pious man enriched. This story was by a later poet elaborated into a sacred song for Saturday night, after the Habdolah (parting benediction pronounced on a cup of wine at the exit of Sabbath) is recited, and hence its great popularity.

There are, of course, paraphrases of the story in later Agadic collections, but no trace of it is found in the main Agadic source. To my mind, it is a Jewish version of a part of the Aladdin story in the Thousand and One Nights where the genii are said to have built for Aladdin a great palace in one night.

This book is, however, the only one dating from the early part of the classic period. The twelfth century is the one during which, as said, books of popular tales and legends begin to appear, both original and translated. To the translated books belong first of all the Hebrew translations of the Hindu Bidpai fables, under the Arabic name, *Kalila V'Dimna.* These fables and animal stories, for the heroes of the stories are two jackals by these respective names, were very famous in the Middle Ages and were translated in all languages. The Arabs, especially, valued them very highly, and in the Arabic editions, a special chapter is devoted to telling of the pains taken by a wisdom-loving king, in order to procure the translation of the book, which was guarded as a great secret. The first Hebrew version was made by Eliezer ben Jacob (1170–1233) at the end of the twelfth century. Of this version we possess a fragment. A little later another translation was made by Rabbi Joel, which was later retranslated into Latin and thus introduced to Europe.

An original book of moral fables and legendary stories was written in Hebrew some time in the twelfth century under the name of The Book of Instruction (Sepher ha-Musor) by Isaac Kraspon. Part of it was later translated into Arabic. But it was not preserved in Hebrew and is only mentioned by Al-Harisi.

The outstanding book of this period containing tales, fables and proverbs and which makes both pleasant reading and also supplied instruction, is the one written by Joseph Ibn Zabara under the name of *The Book of Delight* (Sepher Shashuim).

Joseph ben Meir Ibn Zabara was born about 1140 in Barcelona. There he received his education from his father in all Jewish subjects and also studied medicine, probably at the Jewish School for Medicine at Narbonne, where he met many famous Jewish scholars. It seems that he returned to Barcelona and practiced medicine there the rest of his days until about the year 1200.

Zabara had an extensive education, was a good Talmudic scholar, mastered several languages, Arabic, Spanish and knew some Greek, but above all he was a master of Hebrew. He was well versed in his art of medicine but knew also other sciences, such as astronomy, especially calendar calculation, mathematics and physics. During some part of his life, he was persuaded by a stranger to undertake a traveling journey and visit together with him foreign lands and cities. It seems, that he did it with some hesitation and only after much persuasion by his companion and must have always regretted it. It is this journey which serves as the frame for his book. From the fact that his companion is pictured there as a descendant of Satan, and from the uncomplimentary way in which he is spoken of, it is evident that the journey was not to Zabara's heart. On the other hand, all scholars agree that the journey and the companion are not mere imagination, but really grossly exaggerated records of events.

The *Book of Delight* baffles exact description, for it is a veritable little encyclopedia. It has a large number of folk tales, an exceedingly large number of chosen proverbs and epigrams, a good deal of anatomy and other branches of medicine and bits of other sciences and above all, a healthy and sound humor.

Its summary is as follows: In the first chapter or portal, the author tells us how one night he dreamt that somebody was waking him and inviting him to eat and drink. He awoke and actually saw a stranger standing before him with food and drink in his hand. Before inquiring who he is, he plunges into a monologue proving that one is to pray before he eats. In the monologue the rabbis and Aristotle are quoted on the value of prayer, the latter being quoted as saying that prayer makes for the life of the soul, while food only for the life of the body. As he sits down to eat a battle of wits ensues between Zabara and the stranger regarding the drinking of wine, the former depreciating wine and the latter praising it. Proverbs and aphorisms fly from both sides, Galen, Hippocrates and Aristotle are invoked by both, and the result is that both agree that moderate drinking of wine is beneficial.

The second chapter opens with the invitation of the stranger that he join him in his travels. Zabara then looks at him and sees his strange and gigantic appearance and hesitates. He is especially reluctant after hearing the stranger's name, which is Enan Hanatash, the son of Arnon the Dosh (Natash and Dosh, when reversed read Satan and Shed, i. e. devil), a name full of terror. An argument on the merits and demerits of travel is then started, and when finally pressed for the reason of the refusal, Zabara delivers himself of a discourse on physiognomy, supposed to be taken from a book ascribed to Plato, in which he indicates his aversion to the appearance of Enan. The latter takes umbrage at the insinuation. Zabara then tells him a long tale of the fox and the leopard. This tale, which is of Hindu origin and very elaborate, serves as a frame for five other tales.

The gist of it is as follows: A fox which is afraid of the nearness of the leopard in the vicinity attempts to persuade him to change his residence. He points out a swampy place which in dry season looks glorious, but dangerous when overflooded by the rains, as a suitable place of residence. The leopard is captivated by the place but tells the fox that he must consult his wife. The fox makes some uncomplimentary remarks about women and tries to prevent the leopard from consulting his wife. Nevertheless, he did ask her and she casts suspicion on the sincerity of the fox and tells him a story about the fox and the lion where the first proved perfidious. The leopard tells the fox of his wife's remarks. He then grows eloquent and tells the leopard four stories about women where the woman is pictured as perfidious and unfaithful to her husband. The moral is that no one should listen to his wife. The leopard is then convinced and moves to the new place, with the result that when the rains come, he is drowned and is, of course, made to remark that woe is to the one who does not listen to the advice of his wife.

In this story, the general moral is that a man is to listen to the advice of his wife, while the four other stories speak to the contrary. So we can not decide whether Zabara loved or hated women. The stories have parallels in Jewish and world literature; among them is also the story of the widow of Ephesus, who is said to have exhumed the body of her recently dead husband in order to save the life of her more recently acquired lover.

The purpose, for which the long tale was quoted by Zabara, is to prove that no man should allow himself to be persuaded to leave his birthplace. Enan resents the epithet of fox and redoubles his persuasion until finally Zabara yields. The chapter contains also a number of sharp pointed proverbs against women. Most of them are found in Arabic and Hebrew collections but many are not. One in particular deserves to be quoted. Socrates, whose wife, Xantippa, was not only evil tongued but evil looking, being short and thin, was asked why he chose such a wife. The answer was, I chose as little of evil as possible.

In the third chapter, after they started on their journey, Enan tells Zabara a folk tale about a king who saw a strange dream where a monkey was jumping on the necks of the wives in his harem. He is, of course, anxious to know its meaning and after long search a peasant's daughter tells him the secret that a man dressed in woman's clothing is hiding in his harem. He is discovered and all the wives killed and the peasant girl marries the king. This story which is Indian, for we have a close parallel to it in Hindu folk stories, is as usual complicated and includes another one.

The fourth chapter proves that Zabara's fears of Enan were not unfounded, for he treats him badly on the way, supplying him with poor fare and no wine. The former protests and the latter quotes book and proverbs, that the less food one eats the better off he is.

In the fifth chapter, while the travelers pass through a city, Enan tells of the wisdom of the judge who resides there, and illustrates this by several stories. The stories included the one about a prince who bought a necklace from a Jew and denied the purchase, but the judge, who took cognizance of the fact that the defendants take off their shoes in Mohammedan courts, recovered it by sending his bailiff with the shoe of the nobleman to his house for the necklace, showing the shoe as a proof of the noble's command. This as well as the other stories are of Arabic origin and are found in the Thousand and One Nights in a somewhat changed version. As one of the stories mentions a cantor who was a thief, a diatribe against cantors is launched and Zabara asks Enan why do people say that cantors are fools? Enan offers several answers to this grave question. In general, cantors are very unpopular in Jewish literature, and almost all satirists have made them their butt.

In the sixth chapter it is told how they travel on and while stopping in one city at the house of an old man, he entertains them with stories. One of these stories is the story of Tobit. This apocryphal story is told by Zabara, a little differently than it is told in the apocryphal book, and most likely he had a Hebrew version before him or an Arabic one.

The seventh chapter contains 100 proverbs, very pointy, and they are wittily told by another host, in another city, by the name of Judah. The proverbs are culled from various Arabic sources. We will, however, quote one or two. A nobleman reproached a wise man on account of his low descent. Replied the wise man, "My nobility begins with me but yours ends with you." An Arab was asked, "What was the cause of your brother's death?" and he answered, "His life."

In the eighth chapter, Enan entertains Zabara at his own house, and being stingy, he dissuades him from eating much. Here begins the great battle of wits. All authorities are invoked, Plato, Aristotle, Galens, Hippocrates and a host of others, medical rules are cited mostly by Enan in order to prevent Zabara from eating too much. Zabara, here and there, quotes an authority on his side, but is not convinced by his opponent and does justice to the food, consuming practically all of it.

The ninth chapter contains thirty-two questions in medicine and physics asked of Zabara as a punishment for his excessive eating. He, however, stands the test and answers them all. But when in the next chapter (X) Zabara turns upon Enan and asks him diverse questions in medicine, physics, astronomy and mathematics, he answers to all of them, I do not know. When Zabara chides him for his ignorance and reminds him that he said beforehand that he knows of all sciences half, Enan gives a very clever answer, "Aristotle said," he says, "that the one who says, I do not know, has thus stated half of the knowledge." This saying is quoted several times in proverb literature.

In the last three chapters (XI–XIII) Zabara tells us that he found that Enan is of the genus of demons, but the latter assures him that no evil will befall him. He then spends some time with him in his city, and advises Enan not to marry a certain girl, the daughter of a man of evil repute. During their discourse a discussion on women develops. Zabara disparages low descent and praises a woman of scholarly lineage. Finally, Enan agrees with him and himself tells a story of a woman who performed the mission of a devil working mischief, and ultimately marries a woman of Zabara's choosing. Zabara finally returns home to Barcelona, the city wherein dwelt the Prince, Rabbi Shesheth, the great physician and benefactor. The book ends, like the preface, with a panegyric to Rabbi Shesheth, and it is also dedicated to him.

The style of the book is delightful. It is written in rhymed prose, Zabara being the first to write a whole book in that style. It is flowing and lucid, and if we add the sparkling wit and the wisdom expressed in many sayings, we can say it deserves its name—The Book of Delight.

203. PROVERBS AND APOTHEGMS

The Jews, like the Arabs and all people of the East, loved the pointy proverb, the apothegm, which is the best vehicle of wisdom, and not only delights but instructs as well. The Proverbs of Solomon, and the other wisdom books are the best examples of such predilection for this form of literature. The Talmudic and Agadic literature contains hundreds of proverbs and aphorisms scattered throughout its various books dealing with all phases of life and conduct. In the later period, when the Jews came in contact with the Arabs, the vast collection of Arab and Oriental proverb literature was frequently drawn upon by Jewish writers in their books for purposes of illustrations. Almost every book on ethics, philosophy or kindred subjects, contains a considerable number of proverbs. Yet, few of the writers in the classical period troubled themselves to compile their own collections of aphorisms. The whole proverb literature of the period is reduced to two books, of which one is an original compilation and that in Arabic, and only later translated into Hebrew, and the other one is a translation of an Arabic book compiled by an Arab.

The first one is *The Choice of Pearls* (Mibchar ha-Peninim) by Solomon Ibn Gabirol. About the authorship of the book there was a controversy for a long time. Some ascribed it to Gabirol and some to a later man called Yediah Bedarsi, who lived during the thirteenth century in Provence. This Yediah, on account of his fine Hebrew prose, was named Penini (i. e. pearl producer) and therefore, it was thought that a book with this name rightly belongs to him. It is, however, definitely established now that Gabirol was the author and that it was written in Arabic and only later translated into Hebrew by Judah Ibn Tibbon, the famous translator.

The book is a collection of proverbs and aphorisms that have for their purpose to inculcate moral teachings in all phases of conduct. It is thus primarily an ethical book. The proverbs are culled from the entire Arabic literature and arranged according to subjects. There are sixty-four short chapters, each dealing with a certain subject. There are chapters "On Wisdom," "Love of Truth," "Modesty," "Humility," "Love," "Friendship," "On Keeping a Secret," "On Precious Virtues," "Forgiveness," "Haste," and all other possible virtues or vices which respectively lead to a good life or vice versa.

Of the hundreds of proverbs sparkling with wit and wisdom we will select a few at random. Here are two in praise of knowledge: "A wise man was asked "Why are you wiser than your friends?" He answered: "Because I spent more on oil (the midnight oil) than they on wine." Another one was asked, "Who are more important, wise or rich men?" The answer was, of course, the wise. But the rejoinder was "Why then do we see the wise at the doors of the rich and not vice versa?" To this the reply was given "Because the wise know the value of riches, but the rich do not know the value of wisdom." On Patience: "Bear the truth even if it is bitter." On Temperance: "A king said to a wise man, 'Were you only to ask me I would support you during your whole life.' Said the wise man, 'And why should I ask? I am richer than you, for I am satisfied with the little I have, while you are not satisfied with the much you possess.' " On Friends: "Friends are of three kinds, some are like food without which you can not exist, some are like medicine which you need at certain times, and some are like a disease that you never need." On keeping a secret: "The secret, as long as you do not reveal it is your prisoner, but after you revealed it, you are its prisoner," which means that after telling it you will fear the consequences. On Modesty: "What is modesty? Not to do anything in private which one will be ashamed of publicly." On Silence: "Talk little, for the less a man talks the fewer are his errors."

This book was also translated by Joseph Kimhi in verse, with comments under the name *Shekel Hakodesh* (The Sacred Coin, in reference to the meter in which it is cast, for meter, in Hebrew, is Mishkal). But the added rhyme and meter, as well as the comments rather spoiled the original wit and brilliancy and the prose version of Ibn Tibbon is much to be preferred.

The other book is the *Moral Teachings of the Philosophers* (Musre ha-Pilisuphim), a collection of apothegms and aphorisms of the sayings of the philosophers compiled in the ninth century by the Syrian, Honein ben Ishak (809–873), the great translator of Greek books into Arabic. The aphorisms are culled mostly from Greek books, but they contain a large number of additions of Arabic and Oriental origin. The book was translated into Hebrew by Judah Al-Harisi under the above-named title.

It consists of three sections or portals divided into chapters. The first is devoted to the praise of knowledge and its various branches, with special attention to music. The second deals with the various phases of life and conduct. The third is a part of a romance on the death of Alexander the Great, giving the contents of the letter sent by him before his death to his mother, her reply and eulogy over him when his body was brought before her, and the eulogies of his friends and companions. Alexander, as is known, was the favorite hero of the Orient and many stories and sayings were spuriously told and ascribed to him.

The aphorisms on the whole, are given in the name of various Greek philosophers, especially of the most favored of them as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. That the greatest part of them are spurious, there is no doubt, but that was the Mediæval way. There is an ascetic ring to the book, enjoyment in life is disparaged and the shadow of the other world falls over it. The virtues of moderations, continence and humility and, above all, the search for wisdom are praised, and naturally, woman comes in for a good deal of blame. It is less orderly arranged than the Choice of Pearls and seems to be thrown together without any plan. It contains also a few stories, among them that of the poet Inkas and the Cranes, known in all European literatures.[1]

We will also quote a few of the aphorisms of this book. "Greed and pride are signs of hidden poverty," meaning of course, poverty of soul. "Life is like a scroll, while unrolling one part, you roll up the other part," which means that the coming experiences make us forget the previous ones. "How can a man revenge himself on his enemies?" "By adding more excellence to his own soul," is the answer. "The wise man understands the fool, for he was a fool in his youth, but the fool never understands the wise man." Diogenes was asked, "When is it good for a man to eat?" The answer was, "The one who has food when he is hungry, the one who has not when he gets it." Ptolemy said, "Man acquires riches, but riches also acquire man." It is an ironical remark meaning that for money you can acquire the services of the best man. "There is no cure for the fool and it is best to keep at a distance from him."

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[1] The story found in many school books is as follows: The poet, Inkas, traveling in a lonely place, was attacked by murderers. He looked for help but there was none coming. He finally raised his eyes to the sky and saw cranes coming, and called on them to be the avengers of his blood. Later, his murderers came to the assembly of their people in the city and a crane passed repeatedly over their heads screaming. They remarked mockingly that it must be the avenger of the poet. The remark was overheard and they were brought to trial, confessed and were sentenced to death.

204. SATIRE AND HUMOUR

Arabic literature of the tenth and eleventh centuries has developed a new species of humorous and satirical writing. This was known as the *Maquama,* literally the assembly. It originally meant a description of how several poets came together and rivaled each other in composing odd pieces of humorous poetry. Later it assumed somewhat changed form, namely, one traveling scholar and poet forms the center of the *Maquama,* and the narrator tells of his exploits. Very often a series of *Maquamas* were joined together, by the device of making the narrator meet the traveling poet or scholar in various places, and tell his different adventures and tilts with other poets, from which he usually emerges the victor. The great master of this *Maquama* literature was Hariri (1054–1121). His *Maquamas* were full of humor and sparkling wit and were considered the consummation of literary skill.

This kind of literature found imitators among the Jews. The first who composed a similar work in Hebrew was Solomon Ibn Zikbel (twelfth century). His hero, whom he named Asher ben Judah, passes through a series of adventures and strange experiences, in search of a mysterious woman who was supposed to have confessed her love for him in a letter. The adventures and experiences are humoristically described in a series of chapters or *Maquamas.*

The most important work of this kind is the collection of humorous pieces by the name of *Tachkemoni,* an assembly of wise men, the closest approach to the Arabic word, Maquama, written by the poet, Judah Al Harisi (for his biography see Ch. IX). This traveling poet of whose poetic work we spoke above (Sect. 126) was the most fitted to produce in Hebrew a work which could rival in brilliance and wit that of Hariri. As a matter of fact, he at first undertook, at the request of lovers of Hebrew literature in Toledo, to translate the Maquamas of Hariri into Hebrew, which work he completed, after some time, and named it *Mahbaroth Itiel* (i. e. The Maquamas of Itiel), thus changing the Arabic name of the hero, Abu Said, to the Hebrew Itiel, a name found in Proverbs XXX, 1). But, while working on this translation, which he accomplished with great skill, Harisi felt that his mastery of Hebrew is so complete and that his own sense of humor is probably not less keen than that of Hariri, and decided to compose an original book in the same language. Harisi tells us, in his introduction, that he wrote his book in order to show to the world that the Hebrew language is as elastic as the Arabic, and that we can express in it all kinds of thoughts so that there is no need to translate from other languages. On his travels in the East during the years 1218–1220, he found several patrons who gave him financial support and it is to these patrons that he dedicated the book. It seems as if he dedicated the book to two different persons. In the first chapter he dedicates it to the president of the Jewish community at Damascus, Rabbi Josiah, of Davidic descent, who helped him greatly while he stayed in the city. In the introduction, however, he dedicates it again to Samuel Ibn Albarkala, also of the same city. The introduction, most likely, was written later.

The *Tachkemoni* is divided into fifty chapters or portals, each one dealing with a different episode or experience or imaginary subject, but they are joined together by the usual *Maquama* device, that the narrator meets everywhere the hero, who is an adventurous scholar. The narrator in the book is Hēman ha-Ezrohi and the hero one by the name of Heber ha-Keni. Both names are Biblical. The first one is mentioned as the author of Psalm 88; the second one is a combination of two different names. Heber the Kenite is represented in the book both as a master of all arts and as a master rogue. He assumes many roles, that of traveling physician, mendicant preacher, poet, astrologer, narrator and many other vocations. There are, however, in the book a number of chapters where the narrator himself tells the story without the coöperation of Heber, thus giving the book a more varied aspect.

The *Tachkemoni* represents a real assortment of various literary wares. There are prayers and sermons for the pious, love ditties and stories for the lover, tales of travel and descriptions of cities and countries for those who enjoy travel, chapters on the history of poetry and rules for poetry making for those interested in literature and a number of wise sayings, proverbs, and fables, riddles and other matters which can not be classified. On account of this peculiar nature the book can not be summarized, but only generally described. The original form of the Maquama where the literary hero enters in a contest with other poets to show his excellence and skill is well represented in the book, at least nine such contests are found there, and, of course, in all of them, Heber, the hero, is the victor. In these chapters Harisi displays great skill, as the most difficult subjects are drawn upon. Thus, in chapter four, two poets, of which Heber is one, compete as to who can make the most excellent poetic description of as well as a poem on an insignificant subject. Heber takes the flea and devotes to it a long rhymed prose description and a poem. In chapter five, twelve poets compete, each one taking a month, of the year and extolling it. Chapter eight contains a letter written by Heber which when read straight is one of praise, but when read from the bottom up is derogatory and insulting. Another chapter (XI) contains two letters, one in which every word in it contains the letter Resh and the other where that letter is not used at all. Thus there are other contests where poets show their skill, the contestants are sometimes seven, sometimes ten or more. The contest is sometimes expressed in a series of questions and answers such as chapter thirty-six where Heber tells Heman how he earned a few good meals and some money by undertaking to answer all kinds of questions. The series then follows. The answers are all of a moral and proverbial nature.

Another feature closely akin to the first is the debate between two writers, each undertaking to praise a certain thing. There are about thirteen such debates on various subjects. Thus there is a debate between body, soul and reason (XIII), between a Rabbanite and Karaite (XVII), on the best virtue where seven young men participate (XIX), and also on such subjects as travel (XXVII), wine (XXVIII), where both sides are presented. There are debates between day and night (XXXIX), the pen and sword (XL), man and woman (XLI) and other subjects.

Besides these subjects there are a large number of miscellanies, a satire on cantors (XXV), a sermon on temperance in life (2), a speech by a rooster in his own defense, showing why he should not be slaughtered (X), and the like. Two other features are especially to be noted, one is the two chapters on the history of Hebrew poetry (III, XVIII) which possess both historical and literary value. In them Harisi mentions a large number of poets and pronounces his judgment upon them. This helps us to know the time when the poets lived and also how they were esteemed in the literary circles of that age. The other is chapter eighteen where Harisi lays down seven rules for composing good poetry. One statement of his deserves to be quoted. Says Harisi, "People are as a rule divided into three categories: simple ones, intelligent men and poets." Now a poet, in order to please all three classes must at times use easy and plain subjects so that the simple should like them, and at times he must deal with deep subjects and employ chosen words so that the intelligent be pleased, and above all, his technique must be perfect and the poems beautiful to please the poets, the best judges. Among Hebrew poets only Judah Halevi succeeded to please all the three classes, the others fell short of the mark in one way or another.

The two chapters (XLVII, XLVIII) wherein he describes his travels makes both delightful and useful reading. In them we get a picture of the life of the Jews in the important cities of the East. Harisi, as said, traveled widely and visited Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Babylon. In his descriptions we obtain much information about the scholars, poets and leaders of the Jewish communities he visited, and thus it serves as an excellent complement to the information obtained from the itinerary of Benjamin who visited the same cities fifty years before.

The *Tachkemoni* consists really of two parts, that of the prose which is rhymed and the poetic, namely, the numerous poems, which make up more than half of the book. Harisi's place as Jewish poet has been discussed already (Ch. IX, Sect. 126). As for his prose style, we can say that while in poetry he falls behind the great master, in prose, and especially rhymed prose, he is the master of all. His style is rich, flowing and elastic, his wit keen and description vivid. As Harisi stands at the boundary of two periods in Jewish literature, we can say that although a great part of his literary activity falls within the thirteenth century, he belongs primarily to the classic period, which closed with the twelfth century. He is the last of a long series of poets and writers who, during three centuries, have enriched Jewish literature and whose productions made that period the classic one.

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